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# HOT FOR THE PASTOR

BY

W. T. HACKER.



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Duluth,  
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## PREFACE.

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"Go AWAY with that stuff! I don't want to hear any more of it. It will never amount to anything, anyhow!" exclaimed Mrs. Maybrook, as, with manuscript in hand, I walked into her kitchen and ventured to read what I had written. The poor woman couldn't be blamed. She had been unusually hard pressed with household duties on this particular morning, whilst my own mind had been pleasantly employed in recalling scenes and events of bygone days and feasting on bright visions of authorship. Still, I had faith that my tip-top pastoral experience would touch a responsive chord at least in many another preacher's breast. Accordingly, I beat as dignified a retreat as possible to my study, where I completed my task, which, with the help of the publisher, I now lay before the indulgent reader.

THE AUTHOR.

DULUTH, MINN., January, 1894.



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**W**ot for the Pastor.



# HOT FOR THE PASTOR.

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## CHAPTER I.

BEFORE giving a description of our new home I will speak briefly of our long and uneventful trip to this little city in the far West. I need not describe the sad scene at the old home depot; the silent handshaking when no one attempted to utter a word. There was, at length, a gentle jerk, and the great train began moving. Our window was lowered after that final adieu was waved. Then succeeded that tugging heart-weight, the trembling lip, the reclining head, the unrestrained tears always seen and felt when a sense of absolute homelessness suddenly crowds upon the mind. But it was only momentary. Our train was now speeding towards our new home and new life. This thought tended to crowd out sadness; caused us to brush away our tears and bravely face the future.

As is usually the case, these facts bearing upon ourselves must have been noted by a few of our fellow-passengers. At least, Mr. Cooper, who had boarded the same coach at the same time and place, found it convenient to halt in front of the

seat occupied by myself and wife and say a few consoling words. Amongst other remarks of his while standing there, I was deeply impressed by the following, perhaps because we, at that instant, stood so much in need of a little bit of philosophy.

Said he: "While these earthly homes of ours have their practical and sentimental sides, the sentimental should always yield to the practical, especially as these homes are, in their nature, transient and fleeting. Therefore," he concluded, "no matter how closely I may become attached to a particular locality where my home may happen to be one year, if I can better the material condition of myself and family at some other point on the earth's surface, I consider it my duty to change my home to that other point, though thousands of miles intervene."

Mrs. Maybrook and I both became interested at this point and really desired to hear more such words, even if we had previously preferred to be left to our own reflections. My wife slowly turned her attention from the car window to Mr. Cooper's face, and I, unwilling to see him stand, arose and occupied with him the vacant seat directly in front.

I told him then where we were going; that in response to a call to settle as pastor with a small struggling church far out in the mountains of the great West, myself and family were, now, fairly

on our way thither. I continued, "We have cut loose from the home of our childhood and youth. We have left many true hearts behind us, we know. Shall we find hearts as true and as many of them where we are going?"

"Of course," he replied, "this can only be determined by a somewhat protracted residence amongst the members of your flock and others in your new location."

"But, oh! the necessity for such a long residence in order to find new and true-hearted friends and brethren! Why leave behind so many hearts that have already been tested and found true in order to look for others amongst strangers?" said I with downcast eyes, demurely shaking my head.

"For Christ's sake!" exclaimed Mrs. May-brook.

"Yes, for Christ's sake!" I repeated, brightening up and glancing back, meantime, at my helpful wife.

Well, we at last arrived at our journey's end, more dead than alive from the jostle, smoke and grime, loss of sleep, and anxiety, the inevitable accompaniments of modern railway travel.

Why it is that, along with all the surprises of the age in the line of invention, some genius doesn't think of a contrivance for shielding railway passengers from the necessity of almost constantly breathing the poisonous coal gas and smoke from

the engine, is a matter on which I have often pondered as a sufferer, but on which I have never been able to obtain any light. Nor would it require any great inventive genius to hit upon a device of this kind. Having been forced to think seriously along this line myself, that necessity which is said to be the mother of invention has, at times, all but given birth in my own mind to such an attachment.

I need not recount all that was pleasant and otherwise during this long journey of many hundreds of miles. Suffice it to say that there were occasional glimpses and surprises that flashed upon our minds through the car window west of the great rivers, and especially while crossing the Rocky Mountains, that caused us to realize gradually that we had entered a new world of natural phenomena. Tossed up ledges of rock, serving as skeletons to mountains, point upward at every conceivable angle. Upon the sides of these slanting ledges, portions of towns and cities have come to be built, and the mind in the midst of such a war of angles loses the level and is strongly of the conviction that costly residences of brick and stone are not standing plumb. Mountain streams come dashing their waters into foam towards you, and you are surprised to see water struggling so hard to get up hill.

Before retiring you sit at your window gazing

at the dark mountain wall that obstructs the view to the eastward. The eye gradually climbs the dark wall, attracted by the increasing light near the sky line ; then higher still until the point of the longest tooth of this surrated sky line is reached. Suddenly and rapidly there rolls around this point a bright silver moon, apparently several times magnified. That is, after your surprise, you are enabled to see that it is the moon ; but you were really in doubt at first from the fact that her appearance was so sudden and unlooked for, so phenomenally large, terrestrial and close at hand.

In the midst of just such surroundings we now, strangely enough, discovered that our home life was to be found for an indefinite future.

The town of Hodon claimed a population of two thousand souls, and is situated in a large fertile valley with a rim of mountain walls on every side. Upon the eastern swell of this valley, at the point where the valley and the mountain may be said to come together, the town is built and extends in a straggling way up to and within the very mouth of Grace Canyon. Out of this canyon suddenly rushes a large volume of crystal snow water, the most of which glides on, pell mell, through the town along the channel which it has cut out for itself. Enough, however, is deflected

from the main channel to send down the gutters of each principal street streams of laughing water which see that each garden and lawn along the way is properly irrigated, and then they hasten on to spread their wealth of moisture upon the broad bosom of the valley beyond.

On our arrival at the depot we found none of the brethren in waiting. We had neglected to wire them at the proper time as to the particular train on which we might be expected, and not knowing the precise hour of our departure they had been unable to calculate the time of our arrival. Entering the bus, therefore, we presently found ourselves comfortably housed in the best hotel.

## CHAPTER II.

WHILE standing in the hotel office I observed old Brother Sandrick passing by on the sidewalk in front. I had met the old brother during my former visit to this place; and I now hastened to the door and hailed him. He halted on hearing his name pronounced, and turning half way around and leaning forward upon his cane, looked at me a moment before recognition. Presently recognizing me, he gasped aloud: "Well!" at the same time tossing back his head and shoulders and throwing up both hands in a manner that was calculated to suggest mock courtesy. But it was not so intended, as I have since learned; simply a way the old gentleman had of passing himself off. He was about seventy years old and quite gray. It was not to say a cold day, but the old man wore a long ragged overcoat of coarse, hand-me-down material, gathered tightly about the loins by a leathern belt with a heavy iron buckle which gave him a kind of rag-bag appearance.

As I approached him with hand extended, he shifted his cane to his left hand which, as usual, also held his covered tin pail, and gave me his

right, at the same time repeating, "Well, well, well!" but said no more.

I said with some enthusiasm as I shook his hand: "Well, Brother Sandrick, we're here!"

He replied with a smirk which was no doubt intended to impress me with his profundity; "But we were here *first!*"

"That reminds me, Brother Sandrick, of what I have heard from some of the brethren."

"What have you heard?" he asked.

"That you have ministered in sacred things, yourself," I explained. But perceiving that he didn't understand, I went on; "I have heard from some of the brethren that you have preached some yourself."

"Well, yes; somewhat. I organized the church in this town seventeen years ago, and have preached for it, you might say, without money and without price ever since."

We had, in the meantime, become seated in chairs in front of the hotel; and without volunteering further information as to whether or not the church had been blessed under so much of his preaching, he proceeded with a touch of bitterness in his tone: "But, four or five years ago a few aristocrats got into the church here, bringing their new-fangled ideas along with them, and then, 'Oh! we must have a pastor; we must have a pastor, like the denominations,

or we'll never prosper.' This was all carried on over my head, and I had nothing to do with it. I did have something to say against it, though. I said to brother Sodders: 'The church is financially weak. There's enough of us right here in the church to preach to all the people that come out on the Lord's day. For one, I am willing to take my turn and not ask any pay for it, either.' I then told brother Sodders to announce that I would talk to the people the next Lord's day; but he didn't do it. I suppose he was in favor of the pastor fod-der-rol, too."

It didn't occur to me at that moment, but it did after I came to be better acquainted with all the parties, that brother Sodders' reason for not making the announcement, as above, was probably because he wanted to do the preaching himself.

"Well, was a pastor called at that time?" I asked.

"Yes; they called him, if that's the way to speak it. At least they got him, and then got rid of him." And as he said this he leaned forward in the chair in which he awkwardly sat, and which he seemed scarcely to fit, and struck a harder blow with his cane than ever upon the stone pavement, which said to me, "It was done; *well* done; and I had a hand in it, and am ready for another job of the same kind!"

After a moment or two, during which neither of



us spoke, he slowly raised his head and looking at me with averted glance, asked: "And may I be so inquisitive as to ask what you are going to do here?"

"Serve as pastor of our church here, of course," I replied.

"Humph! That's news to me. But then I am an old fogey, and it wasn't worth while to consult me. Members of this church have died and been buried up there on the hill without my knowing anything about it till after it was all over.

"But, may I further ask who's been most active in bringing you here? It was Brother Sodders of course, though."

"Yes, F. M. Sodders," I said, reaching into my pocket and handing him the letter purporting to be the official call by the church and subscribed by F. M. Sodders as Clerk.

The old man dipped into the letter and read without the assistance of spectacles a few moments in silence. Suddenly raising his head he exclaimed: "Just what I expected to find! This man Sodders, along with lots of other tom foolery, says here in conclusion: 'I am convinced, brother Maybrook, that you are the very man we need here in Hodon to lead us to grandest heights of victory. And should you see fit to accept this call, you can rest assured of my loyal support so long as you may choose to remain amongst us as our pastor.' "

"Bosh!" he ejaculated as he handed the letter back. "Now do you want me to make a prophecy?"

"You have that privilege," said I.

"Then I prophesy that this man Sodders will be the very first man to turn against you. Remember that I said so when it comes to pass."

I expressed no doubt as to the accuracy of the old man's prediction, though, to tell the truth, I was very skeptical. I could only have wished at the time that every member of the church at Hodon had pledged the friendship and shown the interest in Christianity that Brother Sodders had done. But desiring to conciliate, and if possible make a friend of Brother Sandrick at the very beginning, I imagined I could best do this by causing him to realize that I was equal to the emergency. Accordingly, I began to speak in a modest way as to how my labors in the Gospel had been blessed in other places farther east, when, all of a sudden, the old brother was seized with a bodily paroxysm which cut short my discourse through the fear that I had for his physical health. I was not long, however, in taking in the situation. Unwilling to hear of preaching which himself had not done, or at least of labors performed by another preacher more abundant and blest than his own had been, he had suddenly struck an attitude of playfulness towards our little Jew which, as yet

unable to walk, had crept to us and now stood supported by my chair. What he had done was to turn his attention suddenly to the child and roll a lozenge of white peppermint candy on the ground before it, and then looking at it in assumed surprise, exclaim meanwhile under his breath: "Wh! Wh! Wh!" just loud enough to extinguish any further persistency on my part to press my point.

I did not at this first time understand this conduct of the old man and its purpose, as above stated, but I came to understand it afterwards; for it was many times repeated under similar circumstances in our own home. The candy was always flavored with peppermint; white, and of lozenge shape. He was never known to carry any other kind. And then when one was rolled, it was always attended with an owlish gravity and assumed surprise, but especially with such bodily contortion as to bend his body quite double, whether sitting or standing.

After this conversation with brother Sandrick, I joined my wife in our upper rooms in the hotel, not with a heavy heart, but with the first feeling of discouragement in entering upon the work at Hodon. I gathered from him that he regarded my presence in the church as an intrusion; and I reasoned that if there were others in the church who shared his views and feelings, I

might safely count on failing of their sympathy and support, as my predecessor had done. I said nothing about the conversation to Mrs. Maybrook, except that I had seen one of the brethren; that he had not invited us to his home; that the most of our families were attending a kind of agricultural fair close to town, and that some of them would probably call for us later in the afternoon. We had nothing to do but wait. While doing so, we divided our attention between baby and the high plank fence on the opposite side of the street. This was the only prospect from our window, except a greasy "slap-up" which stood at the rear of a butcher's shop and which was doing service as a smoke-house, judging from the smoke that slowly reeked from its numerous small apertures.

The plank fence, apparently, had been used as a bill-board for a long time; and in comparison with the smoke-house would have possessed some momentary interest for us, had it just then displayed anything like fresh paper. But it appeared, on the contrary, to have been long in disuse; and so much of the last paper used had disappeared that it was not easy to determine what had been last advertised. The last portion of a word composed of large red display letters had been torn off, leaving the three first letters, "SAG." Further down and to the right were some large blue letters preserved intact, which spelled out the words,

“INDIAN OIL.” From this last, added to what we had previously known of this same Indian Medicine show, we were able to supply the letters missing from the word first mentioned, and to read it, “SAGWA!”

Though this matter was thus settled, we could not be wholly rid of it; for the letters which formed these words were so large and highly colored that our eyes could not range out of the window without seeing and being reminded by them, again and again. At length Mrs. Maybrook was enabled to wholly divert attention to another, but scarcely less pleasant reflection: “There’s ‘Annie Rooney,’ again,” she exclaimed.

“Sure enough!” I said, as the whistler hurriedly passed along the sidewalk under our window. It was, in like manner, east, where we had first heard this then popular air; and mosquito-like, it had followed us until that moment. Wherever our train had stopped for any considerable time, or at whatever hotel we happened to be quartered for the night, of a sudden a strain of “Annie Rooney” would be recognized by us as familiar amongst the hundred other strange noises. The little song had happened to possess a measure of that ephemeral merit which for a little time takes a strong hold on the popular mind, and having been sprung upon the whole country at the same time, it was like trying to be rid of one’s own shadow to attempt to

run away from it. And thus, from having nothing more profitable to engage our attention, there had intruded upon our thought matters which were not wholly pleasant from being connected with other days and scenes thereafter destined to become largely a dead past to us.

About five o'clock in the afternoon brother Hardencase and family, returning from the fair, called for us and drove us in their carriage to their own home.

## CHAPTER III.

THREE months had now elapsed since our arrival at Hodon. During this time several things had occurred in connection with our newly found home. These things, of course, could be of no particular interest to the world at large, but they were of considerable importance to us in the sense that a good or bad beginning is always important in any undertaking.

We were hospitably entertained by the Hardencases until the following week, or until we had found a home of our own. Brother and sister Hardencase were enthusiastic professors, unlearned and intensely bigoted. This last was especially applicable to the husband. Sister Hardencase was possessed of a yielding nature, although, as we have said, was enthusiastic in all that she deemed distinctive in our plea. Old "Foddy" Hardencase, as he was called, on the contrary, was intensely bigoted. Were he to have been always judged by his talk, the invariable conclusion, I think, would have been that he entertained no hope, or desire, even, for the salvation of any souls other than those of our own com-

munion. In fact, from hearing him talk, myself, I doubt if he reflected that there were more than a few dozen people whose names did not appear upon our own church rolls. When he arose to speak in the social meeting, he invariably took the New Testament as his theme, and waving it aloft, would exclaim: "I'm a gwine to tell ye jist how it is. They," meaning the denominations, "must come to the Book, or there's no show for 'em. What does this Book say? It says, 'Repent and be baptized, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Sperit.' They've not repented, and they've not been baptized, neither. If they'd jist repent, they'd be baptized! They argy that they've been baptized, but you can't find it in the Book; it's not thar!" And then striking a downward blow with the heavy sheep-bound volume in his right hand, as though hitting all sectarianism plump in the forehead, he would loudly exclaim, "If they can't stand up against the Truth, let' em go down!"

To show still further how extremely narrow and hide-bound the old brother was, I will here give the scope of the first prayer I heard him make, and which we were doomed to hear weekly for an indefinite future.

Falling upon his knees, his right hand clutching the "Book," and hanging over the top of the pew, he broke out suddenly: "O Lord, we thank

Thee for the revelation which Thou hast given us in this Book; that when the Day of Pentecost was fully come, the disciples was all assembled together in an upper chamber where prayer was wont to be made, when suddenly a sound came from heaven as a rushin', mighty wind, and filled all the house where they was a settin', and they was all filled with the Holy Sperit, and commenced to speak to the assembled people as the Sperit gave 'em utterance; and when the people was piurced to the heart and said, 'Men and bruthren, what must we do to be saved?' the apostles didn't strain at a gate and swallow a cable, as the false prophets do now-a-days, but they unsheathed the old Jerusalem blade, and answered, 'Repent and be baptized, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Sperit!' Amen."

The Hardencases were well-to-do people, living a kind of retired farm life in their substantial brick residence on the outskirts of the city, the only other occupants of their home being their widowed daughter, Hester Vane, and her ten-year-old daughter. There remains much to be said of Hester Vane, hereafter, in the course of this narrative. Suffice it to say now, that she was in the matronly prime of splendid womanhood, rich, cultured, beautiful. Tall and graceful as the willow, with perfectly chiseled features and majestic poise of head. Denver had been their home until the

death of her husband, when, as report went, on his death-bed he bound his wife in writings not to marry again, as the condition on which she should inherit his fortune of some fifty thousand dollars. Hester was dashing and venturesome in society, and withal, had inherited too much of her father's passionate, stubborn nature to permit of a harmonious residence of the two families under the same roof.

"Hester is exactly like her father," one had been heard to remark.

"The exact spit of old Foddy," was also heard. And report had it that the language which was sometimes made use of under the Hardencase roof sounded more like anything else than the speech of angels.

The house which we had selected for a parsonage, and in which we had come to be installed, was a curious specimen of architecture, and had rather a curious history. It originally consisted of only two rooms, located upon the bank of Grace Creek, before alluded to, which conducted the water from Grace Canyon through the city and along on its life-giving mission to the broad valley beyond. Subsequently, the house had had a kind of cell-growth—not heavenward, for this would have afforded us the convenience of a second, or upper story, but up and down the Creek, and the newly-added cells, like the first, had been



HESTER VANE.

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each a single story in height, and with ceiling so low in some places as to utterly forbid my standing at my full height. This long, narrow row of flat sheds had been built by, and had been the home of, the most notorious infidel that this place had ever known. In these dreary little rooms he lived, poisoned the minds of his wife and children, and died, finally, without hope. Still, his wife and daughters must have possessed considerable refinement, judging from patches of blue grass and flowering shrubs in the cramped-up little yard in front of the house, and the vine-trailed railing of the miniature bridge over Grace Creek in the rear.

I had now met with and preached to the little band of brethren a few times, but not till we had come to be settled in our own home did I commence in earnest to take an inventory of the affairs of the church. As the most conspicuous feature, possibly from its unsightliness, I first took into consideration the house, which was of soft brown stone, such as is quarried in great abundance in the near vicinity. Unless matched with stone of a lighter color so as to break the monotony, a house built of this material has a slovenly and dirty appearance, somewhat like the sod-house, and appears old when really new. One thousand dollars had been put into this unsightly building several years before, and as the tower

(built from the ground up against the front of the building, and which was of no earthly use) embraced within itself about one-fourth of the material, it is reasonable to infer that about one-fourth of the amount had gone into it.

I could discover the names of no more than about seventy-five members in all, and several of these had not permitted their names to be enrolled because they considered it to be of no advantage to them to be affiliated with so many worldly-minded and indifferent church members. If the finances of the church had been running on any kind of a system at all, it had been, certainly, a kind of "how-not-to-do-it" system, for nothing had been accomplished.

## CHAPTER IV.

AT MY very first convenience I called at the home of each of our families to determine their stage of family life, and the estimation in which the church and church membership were held by them. As a result of such visitation, I was bound to admit that I found room for vast improvement in both these respects. Few there were who did not feel great freedom in criticising human nature when embodied in others than themselves. I noted that such criticism was, as a general thing, most severe in the homes of our poorest families. Was the law of the survival of the fittest at work, and was such criticism a reaction against the operation of such law? It was, at least, quite safe to say that it was all unchristian, and had sprung out of a low grade of spiritual life. There is room in this place for only a few illustrations.

One afternoon I had followed out the direction for finding the home of one of our poorest families by the name of Breeze. I found a little, old, one-story, one-room "slap-up," with walls the thickness of a single plank, and black on the outside from the action of the sun, smoke and wind-

driven dust, and on the inside from smoke and grease. Regardless of streets and alleys, it was situated on a natural drain, which fact had, no doubt, conduced to the health of the family. The slanting approach to this miserable home was strewn with feathers, old tin cans, and refuse of all kinds that had been fought off from the front of the house apparently with the single purpose of getting it outside the door. There were needed only a few human bones to impress one that he was approaching the abode of man-eating human beings. The door of the miserable structure was standing open, and piled-up horse manure supplied the place of a foundation. Arriving within a few steps of the door, I was obliged to note carefully where I placed my feet, and, finally, to spring over quite a space that had become deeply sodden with slops. Rapping upon the door, the only immediate response I received was the sullen bark of a large and fierce-looking dog, whose slumbers I had disturbed, and who now came toward me from the corner of the house with raised bristles and measured steps. Just then I was rejoiced to see a lady, who proved to be sister Breeze, hastening towards me from a neighboring house, at the same time shouting at the dog to be gone.

“Sister Breeze,” I said, after I had learned that it was indeed she, and the dog had slunk be-

hind the house, "I'm your new pastor. I'm hunting up my church members, that I may see them in their own homes and become well acquainted with them."

She made no further reply than to say that she recognized me from having seen me at a distance during my former visit to Hodon. And then, suddenly realizing the obligation to lead the way and invite the pastor into her miserable home, the poor woman appeared, momentarily, crushed. Noting it all, I pitied her from my innermost heart. Leading the way into the cheerless room, she offered me a rickety, splint-bottomed chair. I thanked her as I received it, and sat down upon it as though I had never been accustomed to anything better. As a result of throwing a large part of my weight upon the back part of the chair, a portion of it gave way with a loud crash, which caused her to throw up both hands in affright. Endeavoring to make as little of the accident as possible, I proceeded to ask about the other members of the family. From that I ventured to the subject of religion, and asked, "Sister Breeze, why haven't I seen you out at our services?"

She now raised her eyes to a point midway upon the wall before her, and slowly but firmly replied: "Well, I'll just tell you why. When we lived down on the south side, a year or two ago, I received a note one day from one of the

prominent sisters of the church notifying me to keep my children home from Sunday-school and church, as they weren't dressed well enough to be seen at such places. And it was no one else than sister Lucre, either. I told my husband about it when he came home that evening, and he said I could do as I pleased, but if he was in my place he'd never be seen in that church again; and I never have been."

"If sister Lucre wrote that note, she did wrong, —made a great mistake," I said. "Still, sister Breeze, it really seems to me that you ought not to hold the entire church responsible for a wrong which one member may have committed."

The poor woman appeared to feel the force of this remark, and to realize the weakness of the position she had taken, and without making a reply, or arising, even, she commenced breaking sunflower stalks for burning in her old cracked cook-stove at her elbow. As she dropped the lengths, one after another, upon the almost extinguished embers, she remarked that they had just run out of cobs. Such a luxury as coal in that household, it seemed, was not to be thought of. Arising to take my departure, she really urged me not to go, just then. It really seemed that she had come to be more than half convinced that she had been in the wrong in the matter of the note mentioned, and desired to be wholly convinced by

further argumentation. In other words, her womanly fidelity to her Lord prompted her to be true to him. The matter was further discussed ; and ere I had taken my leave, she as good as promised to come back with her children and resume her old place in the church and Sunday-school.

A couple of squares from this home—if home it could be called—in the same part of town, I entered the home of another of our poor families by the name of Saunders. Though this house appeared to be better constructed than the one just mentioned, and presented an air of more comfort, there was, nevertheless, the same sloppy appearance upon the outside. When I entered, I found Grandma Saunders, the mother of brother Saunders—a very old lady—a maiden sister of brother Saunders, besides his son, a little red-headed boy of about five summers.

No explanation was volunteered accounting for the absence of sister Saunders, wife of brother Saunders, and but little was said about him. Considering the time of day, I could readily account for his absence, but could not so readily account for that of the wife. After several allusions to sister Saunders, all of which failed to call out an explanation, I ventured to ask outright as to the whereabouts of the sister.

“She just went across the way ; she’ll be back after ‘while,’ ” was the answer of the maiden sister.

“No, she didn’t! She shet herself up in the closet!” chimed in the little red-headed boy, in the face of several shs-s-s-s, and against the thrown-back palm of the maiden sister’s hand.

“She did, too!” he quickly repeated in a much louder tone, impatient of contradiction.

Just then the closet door, which opened into the room where we were sitting, slightly trembled, rattled, and then suddenly opened, when out came sister Saunders, with a kind of hang-dog expression on her face, affirming meanwhile,

“He always *did* do that!” which suggested that this had not been her first flight to the closet. Then she went on to explain that she had seen me coming across the vacant lot and had taken me for a book agent. Before taking my departure, however, she admitted that she had recognized me after I had entered the room—had peered through a crack at me, I presume: but she didn’t explain why she didn’t come out at that point to receive me.

As I walked in the direction of the next home to be visited, I mused upon sister Saunders’ embarrassment, and more than half pitied the poor woman. I asked myself, “But for the lack of little red-headed boys, how many similar scenes there would be in the life of every pastor.” Presently I came to where a noisy parrot was suspended in its cage in the sunlight, that portion of

the house jutting up close to the sidewalk. Addressing the bird as though it had been a child, I asked,

“Does Polly want a cracker?”

The bird did not immediately answer, but hooked its beak over its roost, and commenced rapidly going through the usual gymnastics, meanwhile saying in a low tone, as I have seen bashful children do, “Does Polly want a cracker? Does Polly want a cracker?” Moving on, presently, I said, “Good-bye, Polly!” The bird made no reply whatever, until I got some distance away, and had come to think that this was the last of the matter, when, “Good-bye, Polly! pet of the house, where’ve you been? come again, we’ll all have tea, when no one else is near,” came back in loud, rasping, and—I could not help thinking—taunting tones, which was kept up until I had turned the corner and got out of hearing.

I was now nearing a house concerning which I was not quite certain. That is, those who directed me were, themselves, not quite certain whether or not this particular family, though once our own people, desired to be considered as still identified with us. I found the wife at home, and there being no fire in the sitting-room, she invited me into the kitchen, which was warm from the cook-stove. Everything in this home was plain, but neat, and bespoke industry and thrift. I seated myself at

one side of the cook-stove, and the sister resumed her easy chair directly in front. She had evidently been employed at cutting carpet-rags when disturbed by my knock; and now, having seated herself again, was preparing to resume the process and—do most of the talking. Suddenly lifting both feet to the stove-hearth, thus converting the knees into a kind of lap-board, and having nervously smoothed the cloth by a counteracting movement of both hands, she suddenly thrust in a pair of bright shears, and snipped as she talked.

“Yes,” she said, in allusion to my question at the door, “we don’t deny the name; but it has been nineteen years, now, since we came west, and we have never put in our letters. Bro. Newcomer wanted us to do so when he preached here, but we concluded not to do it. Besides”—

“But,” I interposed, intending to administer a slight rebuke, “your family is standing before this community in an unorganized capacity, and for this reason is not in a position for doing near so much for the cause of Christ,”—

“Well, the fact is,” she quickly interposed, “we’re not very well off; and we’ve talked the matter over, and concluded that if we were to connect ourselves with any of the churches we’d have to do our part towards defraying the expenses of the church, and so we just thought we’d stand on the outside.”

Quickly seizing the opportunity, I again sought to administer a mild rebuke for the confessed selfishness ; but before I could get the thought formed and before her mind, she was again leading the conversation. Having taken a sudden dive into the remote past, she was now raking over the dry bones and conjuring up the dust of dead relatives, and causing many generations of them to troop before me in solemn procession. Somehow, I begun to realize that I wasn't near as good a conversationalist as I had sometimes thought. Either that, or my tongue was unusually thick that afternoon, and that of the sister unusually long and thin.

Hence, I decided to be impetuous in the manner of my leave-taking, and suddenly arising, I quickly started for the door, trusting that she would consider this an eccentricity and not be offended.

## CHAPTER V.

UNDER all circumstances, I concluded, after conversing with Mrs. Maybrook, that the church stood in need of nothing so much, just then, as a successful protracted meeting; for a successful protracted meeting meant a large number of conversions, and conversions meant a revival of interest, generally. Accordingly, into a meeting I plunged with all my powers of body, mind and soul, and labored at great risk to my health for a whole month. I ran the meeting during the first two weeks in the face of very great indifference on the part of our membership, and with little encouragement in the way of conversions. But with the beginning of the third week the interest began to awaken; sinners commenced flocking home, and the members were thinking and talking about the meeting. By the end of the fourth week the town had come to be stirred, religiously, as it had never been before, and there were few persons not Christians who were not caused to think on their soul's eternal interests. By the last night of the meeting, eighty-eight persons had confessed their faith in the King of kings, and surrendered to His authority.

The last evening of the meeting had arrived. The house was crowded, and the services commenced. On this evening I selected as my theme, "The Almost Christian," because I had good reasons for believing that many had been brought to this point, as a result of these meetings, and I desired to make the most of the good impressions already made.

Selecting King Agrippa's exclamation to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," I back-tracked, so to speak, upon the words, beginning with the last word first. On the name, "Christian," I showed that the center of a system gives name to the system, e. g.; Solar, Lutheran. Hence, Christ, Christian. "To be," involves that you may be. "Me," a personal matter; cannot be done for you or me. "Persuade," by motives. "Almost," yet you may never be.

On this last I dwelt with all my powers of illustration and exhortation, pleading with such as had come so near to the Kingdom and the Name as to be *almost* Christians that they should, then and there, without postponement, make the most of the good work which God's Spirit had wrought within their hearts by actually deciding for Christ.

The exhortation ended, and the song of invitation arose. And such fervor! It was as though the "one and the same spirit," which has just em-

ployed the preacher's voice in pleading with poor sinners, was now employing hundreds of other voices as full of yearning for the same purpose. Twelve persons struggled forward through the audience and gave me their hands, with the tear of penitence falling. Joy filled every heart, and at my suggestion the brethren made their way to the front without much regard to order, that they might express their congratulations to each of the new converts by a warm pressure of the hand, and a "God bless you!"

Above the shuffling of the feet, above the song that was being sung while this was going on, was heard a sob. Then another, and next a moan, evidently from a lady. All eyes were attracted to where she was excitedly wedging her way to the front through the slowly-moving audience. Some person hearing her sobs and moans, and indignant at being jammed, exclaimed loud enough for her to hear, "That woman's crazy; she ought to be taken out of here!" But the woman heeded not. With tearful eyes, and still louder sobs, she kept on crowding forward with more and more energy until she had reached the front; then, throwing her arms about the neck of one of the men who had gone forward and confessed the Lord, she moaned out as the song concluded: "O Pottsy, Pottsy! is this really you? How glad I am! O blessed Lord! At last, at last

my prayers are answered, and Pottsy has come home!" And then, as if speaking partly to herself and partly to those around her, the poor mother hysterically continued: "Somebody said es one of them that went forward was Potts; and I strained my eyes and said, 'Why, that looks like Pottsy;' but oh! I couldn't believe my own eyes, for I didn't know that the dear boy was thinking of taking sech a step. And then I looked again and said, 'Shorley that is Pottsy!' and then I started right for him."

These unusual demonstrations by the excited mother afforded some amusement for such characters as are always in attendance for no good upon revival services; but on this evening few such characters were present. After briefly reviewing the obstacles with which the meeting had had to contend, the number of conversions and other resulting benefits, I announced that the series had come to an end. Then, addressing myself especially to the converts, I earnestly and tenderly exhorted them, "to cleave unto the Lord with full purpose of heart." Finally, while the audience stood, I breathed a prayer, with uplifted hands, that God would keep his own unto the day of complete redemption, and the crowd slowly dispersed.

## CHAPTER VI.

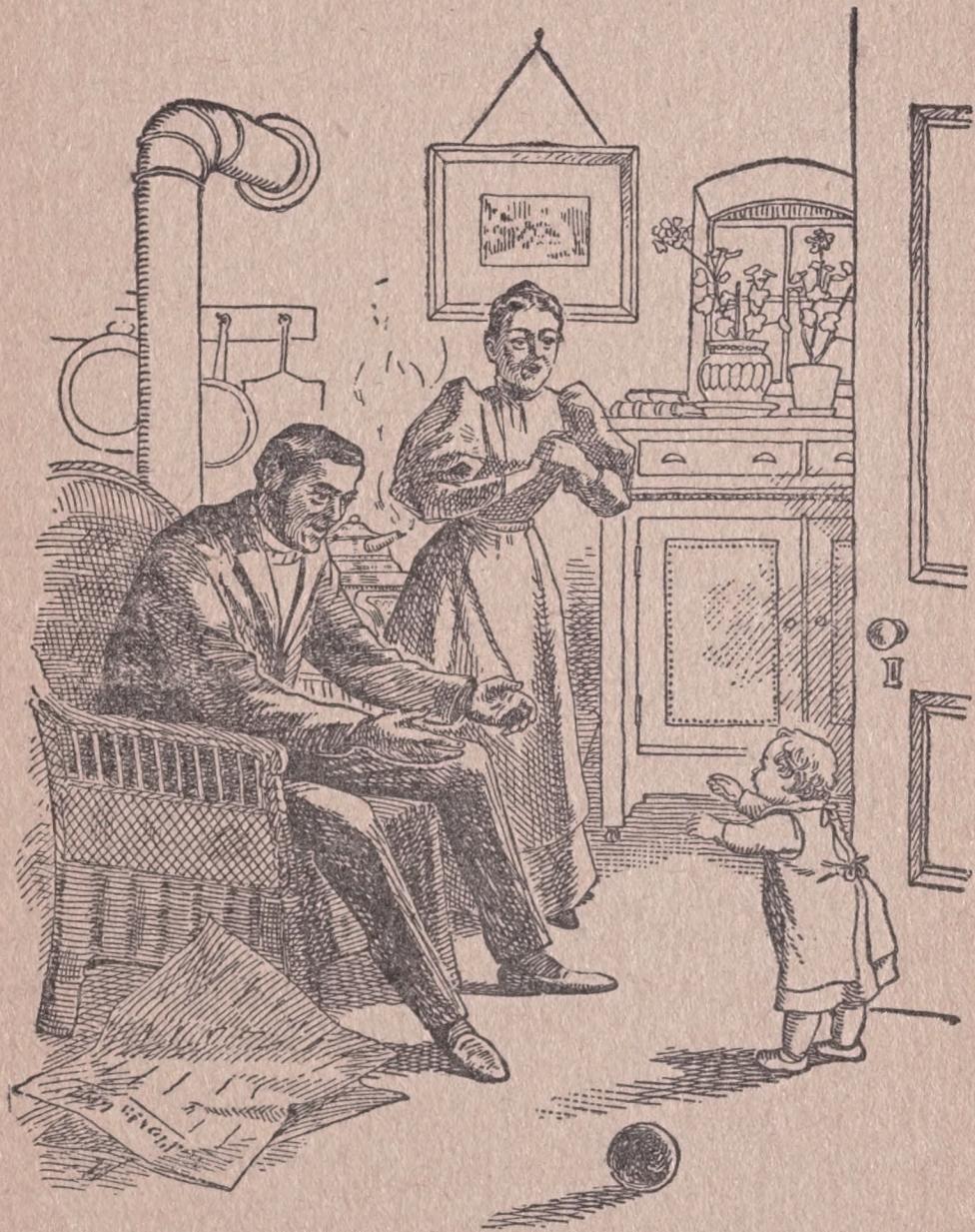
THE next morning, after a late breakfast, Mrs. Maybrook and I lingered at the table and talked over the events and results of the meeting, in particular those of the preceding evening. I could not rid my mind of the Potts scene ; of the mother's demonstrations of joy.

“It *was* an odd scene,” observed Mrs. Maybrook. “So much like acting, and yet so evidently genuine through and through.”

“Genuine, of course,” said I. “I am not troubled on that score; but what troubles me is, who and what is Potts? The odd manner in which the mother expressed her congratulations has not only tended to excite my curiosity on this point, but Hester Vane’s manner while extending the hand has still further heightened my curiosity. I doubt if anybody else observed it besides myself, but being near, I noticed that she blushed deeply as she extended her hand to Potts, and, instead of looking into his face, her head quickly fell forward, till her face rested in her left hand, when I noticed the rush of tears in her eyes. Could it be,” I continued, as a new idea occurred, “that she was overcome by the grip of the strong man’s hand?”

"I can easily believe it," said Mrs. Maybrook; "for it has been many a day since I have endured such agony as I did last evening when that man took hold of my hand."

And then I, too, remembered that it had been the strong, massive hand of the same person closing upon my own that had caused me to wince and suddenly withdraw my hand the evening before. Nothing further was said on the subject, and I selected an easier chair in which I could recline. Resting my feet upon a footstool, I prepared myself for enjoying to the fullest extent that delicious consciousness of freedom which relaxation brings to the worked-down preacher after a night of sound slumber has succeeded the burden of a long meeting, just closed. Notwithstanding it was late in the morning, the sun was just struggling over the purple-rimmed mountains to the east, and the great orb of molten gold was, for the moment, half obscured by a small saw-tooth-like peak. As a living monster whose liberty might have been interfered with, would have thrown out its long horns, or tentacles, in anger and self-defense, so this molten nucleus was darting forth its distributed beams; and as the nucleus slowly moved over the point of obstruction, the great golden spokes slowly revolved till one of them fell upon our window and broke upon the carpet of the room where we were



"The tea-kettle was singing its song of home and peace from its perch on the cook-stove."

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sitting. The tea-kettle was singing its song of home and peace from its perch on the cook-stove in the kitchen, and little Jew was playing with the half-open door only a few feet from my chair. The little fellow had never as yet stood upon his feet, or made his first unassisted step. Having now, by means of the door, succeeded in lifting himself upon his yielding, chubby little feet, he was entitled to our whole attention. While holding thus to the door, he seemed to have all confidence in his ability to stand, but, momentarily removing both hands from the door for some reason, this act, in itself, caused the door to move rather quickly on its hinges and away from the child. Seeming to but slowly comprehend the situation, he remained standing and looking at me for an instant, and then commenced laughing excitedly. Quickly extending both hands towards the little fellow, I pleadingly said, "Walk some to papa, please;" and he made two or three steps in my direction, and fell upon my arms I might add that "Jew" was not our child's real name; but from being his mamma's "precious jewel," and from being the possessor of a mass of closely-clinging dark curls, the *Jew* was, somehow, suggested, and this seemed to fit upon the little fellow better than his real name.

In the midst of our congratulations and rejoicing over the wonderful feat of baby, which little Jew

appeared to understand and appreciate, a knock was heard at the door. Throwing open the door, Brother Sandrick stood before us in all his suggestiveness of mock courtesy. In his right hand he held his cane, and in his left a covered tin pail. Some moments after I extended my hand, he slowly transferred his cane to his left hand, and then as slowly took my own, with a kind of owlish gravity, and continued standing, regardless of my repeated invitations to walk in and be seated. Getting ready, at length, he did so, placing his cap and cane on one side of his chair, and his tin pail, which contained a nicely-dressed chicken, in Mrs. Maybrook's hand, for which he received prompt payment. In this connection, I may as well remark that Brother Sandrick never, thereafter, came to our house unless he had something in the line of eatables which he wanted to sell. After vainly waiting for the old brother to say some word of encouragement on the success of the meeting just closed, glancing at Mrs. Maybrook, I suddenly inquired:

“Brother Sandrick, who and what is Potts?”

The old brother's chin was at this time resting gravely upon the crook of his cane, and before deigning a reply, and without raising his head, he pursed his lips, and drawing down his shaggy eyebrows till his eyes were concealed, bobbed his

head up and down three times, accompanied each time with a jetting nasal hiss intended as expressive of laughter. At length, slowly lifting his head, but not looking at either of us, he said:

“Well, Potts is what would be called in Kansas or Nebraska a Prairie Bachelor.”

“Where does he live, and what does he do?” I again asked, for I had learned nothing as yet that tended in the least to allay my curiosity.

“I think he lives on his claim in a dugout, three or four miles from town. That’s about all I know about him.”

“But his mother,” interposed Mrs. Maybrook, who had been an interested listener to the conversation; “was not that his mother who made over him so on last evening? Where does she live?”

“Here in town, I think.”

Again my wife—this time in a meditative manner:

“She seemed to have great fondness for him on last evening; why don’t she live with her son?”

“Well, now you’ve got me,” said the old man, resignedly. “I can’t tell why she don’t stay out there and keep house for Potts, unless it’s because it’s so lonesome out there, and they ain’t got much of a house to keep; only a dugout, you know. Perhaps he wouldn’t live out there in that hole in the ground, either, if the law didn’t bind

him to hold down his claim there a certain number of years before he can prove up on it."

But I was destined soon to know the whole story, and from Potts himself.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE day continued bright and almost cloudless until near noon, when the sky in a surprisingly short time became completely hidden from view by leaden skies which portended snow. Sure enough, snow soon commenced falling—almost vertically at first—for as yet there had been no wind to speak of. By half past three o'clock in the afternoon the dry ground was covered with several inches of loosely-packed snowflakes, the flakes preserving their individuality as so many downy feathers.

All of a sudden Mrs. Maybrook, who had been standing at the window, called my attention to a distant rumbling sound which seemed not unlike the noise produced by a moving train of cars, or the approach of a hurricane. Arising and standing by her side at the open window, we awaited developments. We had not long to wait. The disturbance, whatever it might prove to be, was evidently in Grace Canyon; and as the great noise rolled down toward us from the deep-throated canyon, the nearer it came the louder and more awful it seemed. At length rushing out of the canyon, the great wind bore down upon the town, picking

up leaves, scraps of paper and the numberless snowflakes, and bearing all upon its bosom like the onward march of a tidal wave. Other and counter-currents of wind, as it seemed from out of other canyons from different points of the compass, struck the town at about the same instant, bearing along with them their burden of snow-flake. Then these different winds, as it seemed, crossed one another's path and commingled. They joined hands, and with cheeks powdered white by the myriad snowflakes of a genuine western "blizzard," they danced, and danced, and danced, not neglecting so much as even a single evolution of the dizzy maze, our door-yard serving for a dancing floor. As swirl the muddy waters of the Missouri, or, more nearly, as swirl the particles of dust and trash of all kinds up through the spiral funnel of the hot weather whirlwind, so the snowflakes that had that afternoon fallen upon our yard, and possibly some of those, also, that had fallen upon hundreds of others, were quickly swished around, in, through, between and over the small shrubs and trees that grew in our yard.

"Four o'clock ! What will become of the children in the public schools!" I exclaimed under my breath, not thinking how or to whom I was speaking. "Four o'clock, and it is even now getting dark, and the blizzard not abating; on the contrary, increasing in ferocity." Just then I was all

but certain that I saw the muffled forms of two little school girls flit, spectral-like, along our sidewalk. The rapidly-moving forms were seen through a snowy medium and were powdered white ; still, from the direction they came, and from the dinner-pail on the arm of the larger, I took them to be two little girls from the public school. “What *will* become of the children in the public schools ?” I again exclaimed ; and as I did so I looked again at wife. Our eyes met and then rested upon our own little Jew, who, wrapped in warm blankets, was sleeping soundly in his crib at our feet.

At the very moment that we thus looked upon and contemplated the safety of our own household treasure, two little girls, aged respectively eight and thirteen, had become lost in an open field little more than a hundred yards away. Their teacher had imprudently dismissed them when four o’clock arrived, with the injunction to hasten homeward. But on reaching the open field through which their path lay, the blinding, piling snow into which they could see but little further than they could have seen into a mill stone, caused them to lose their way. At first they both began to cry ; but quickly the elder regained her composure as she came to realize her greater responsibility, and taking off her own wraps she put them upon her little sister. Amongst the many sorrowful results of the blizzard which were chronicled by the news-

papers during the next few days, was the finding of the lifeless bodies of these two little girls. They were found lying close together in an open field ; were partially drifted over with snow, and their faces were turned to the ground.

As I afterwards learned, these were the same two little girls that had passed our house at the time above mentioned. But to me—they are not dead! Their lithe and graceful little forms flit by our house until now, but never disappearing ; their pattering little feet on our sidewalk still I hear, but never less distinctly! Since then I've traveled thousands of miles, and our home has been pitched on other streets of more populous cities. The wind-driven snows of many another blizzard, the darkness, cold and damp of many another wintry night have come and gone since then, but these two spectral-like little forms, seen through a snowy medium, with just enough glow of lip and cheek to make me all but certain that they were two little girls,—I see to-day as I saw them then!

The snow-storm continued through most of the night with slight abatement until morning commenced to dawn. Then came the usual cloudless sunrise so characteristic of the great West. The wind had gone down awhile before dawn, thus permitting the snowflakes to again fall from the sky and settle back to the earth with a slight incrustation on top. When the sun had at length strug-

gled over the eastern range, his slanting pencils of light gleamed so brightly upon the frosted silver that everywhere covered the earth that our eyes were overpowered by the excessive brightness.

Breakfast over, a loud but hesitating knock was heard at the door. Once, twice, thrice; each time a single stroke only. As I opened the door, I recognized Potts standing before me; but unlike brother Sandrick, he did not remain standing. One, two, three long measured steps brought him inside where I was standing, and ere I was scarcely aware of what was taking place, the bones of my right hand were being forced together in an agony which I could adequately express at the time only by a sharp cry, accompanied by a quick jerk.

I saw before me a man about forty years old, and five feet, six inches in height. His body was massive and well proportioned, and had come to be hardened as sinew from hard labor on the ranch. There was, also, a certain comeliness of form and nobility of countenance in the man, which the tan on the face and the poorly fitting work clothes could not wholly conceal.



POTTS.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

Good morning, Brother and Sister Maybrook. I guess you remember Potts, who joined the last evening of the meeting?"

I assured him that we did, at the same time offering him a seat, and telling him that I was truly glad he had come around as I desired to know more about him. Without appearing to notice the proffered chair, he continued: "I brought mother to town this morning, and as I've ung-ung-ung-ung *an extra horse along with me*, I thought you might like to get on and go out to my ranch and have a chicken hunt to-day. They're badly rattled since the blizzard."

Poor fellow! I saw at once as I looked down into his open, honest face, and frank blue eyes, that he had a thorn in the flesh—a serious stoppage in his speech that had a bad way of manifesting itself at the most critical point in his sentences, just as the thought in the sentence commenced to dawn upon the mind of the listener. Had it been otherwise; had the infirmity always manifested itself after the thought of the sentence had come to be so formed as to be apparent to the listener, the listener, in this case, would often have been able

to help him out of his embarrassment by suggesting the proper word. Indeed, as I subsequently learned, those well acquainted with him and the background of his usual conversation, quite frequently *were* enabled to do this. When I had come to be better acquainted with him, on my alluding to his infirmity in a delicate way, he told me that he experienced difficulty only in the pronunciation of words beginning with a vowel; that he was most liable to stumble on his words at the opening of the conversation, especially with strangers.

“You say the chickens are rattled since the blizzard, brother—Potts?” I asked hesitatingly, as I had not as yet learned whether it was Potts something else, or something else Potts.

“Yes, brother Maybrook; I don’t know where they all came from; but as I brought mother into town this morning, I must have seen as many as a hundred in the tops of the timber ung-ng-ng-ng *along Grace Creek!*” he brought up very suddenly, his face meanwhile flushing a deep red, as it always did when finding himself compelled to stammer in the presence of strangers. Turning to Mrs. Maybrook, I said:

“My dear, I really feel inclined to accept his invitation. I am relaxing, you know, after the meeting. But should there be any enjoyment in the trip for you, I—I—really—”

"There! that will do;" she smilingly said. "Go ahead and I will not consider you selfish. But I really fail to perceive how the trip could bring me any pleasure, personally, as there will be no ladies there, and you will be out hunting all day."

On the contrary, I felt that I should greatly enjoy the freedom and expansion of the day in the open country, and that day in particular, so bright and crisp. My church work was well up; in fact, ahead. "No such meeting had ever before been held in Hodon," was affirmed by many of the old members; and as a preacher, I stood above par in their estimation. Old Brother Sandrick, had been heard to remark that himself, even, at times, had seen the flash of the Old Jerusalem blade.

After less than an hour's ride, we arrived at Potts' dug-out on the "Potts Ranch," as it was commonly called. The preparations for the hunt being made after our arrival at the dug-out, we soon found ourselves tramping over the bright snow and crashing through the crust at every step. The first thing I did after being fairly started, was to allow myself to become entrapped in a wolf's den, something after the method we read of for catching wild elephants. The den opened upward and was filled with snow, which was largely covered with tufts of dry grass and weeds, and I shall

always think that Potts knew better when he suggested that I jump upon and frighten the game out of that mass of dry vegetation. For some time we had been skirting along the sloping bank of a broad and shallow draw, or dry branch, and had just come to the corner of an unfenced corn-field, when, whir-r-r-r! whir-r-r-r! whir! whir-r-r-r-r! bang! bang! And then, results; or, rather result; for only one chicken had dropped. Cause: I had carried the gun. Potts had played ignorance in the handling of guns, and had strongly insisted that I should do the shooting. Still, I couldn't help thinking that if he had had a gun, there would have been more results. At least a dozen and a half of these beautiful partridge-like fowls had just surprised us by their sudden presence and lightning-like disappearance. For a few hundred yards they flew almost in straight, but somewhat divergent, lines in the same general direction, and then in a scattering way, dropped down through the snow-crust. Following them up, although they must have distinctly heard our crashing footfalls, they suffered us to come so close to them that we could see the holes in the crust in which they were hiding. Then there would be the same whir-r-r-r-r! and, generally, the belated bang! bang! For the whir was always so sudden and unlooked for as, in a measure, to paralyze me into a kind of passivity.

And thus the most of the day was spent; and as we bent our weary steps towards the dug-out, the small number of fowls in our bag, and the large number of empty shells in our belt, spoke too plainly of my lack of skill with the gun. On arriving at the dug out we were very tired—at least I was. Potts was accustomed to such vigorous use of his muscles; but, certainly, I had had more exercise for one day than was good for a man of sedentary habits to begin with. For this reason it wouldn't do to think of going home that evening. Besides, we had had no dinner, and Potts must yet prepare our supper. Our supper was plain, but we were hungry, and it was eaten with a decided relish. It consisted of coffee, fried pork, milk, butter and good bread, for Potts had the wife of a neighbor employed to bake his bread.

Supper over, we were too tired to talk much, and soon found our way to bed, where I slept soundly until the next morning. After another plain meal for breakfast, my companion and I drew our chairs up close to the warm cook-stove and commenced talking over the experiences of the day before. I had at last met with Potts, and had been intimately associated with him for a whole day. Unknown to himself, I had narrowly observed him during all this time, and while I was still in doubt as to the correctness of many of my conclusions, I had come to be satisfied of one

thing, namely, that his was a warmly-emotional nature and brim full of sentiment. I arrived at this conclusion, not simply from what I had seen of his mother and of his own contemplative air, but also from noting the drift of his conversation.

“Potts,” I said, “there is something about you that I can’t quite make out. How a man of your intelligence and sensibilities can endure to live alone in this dug-out, and, in a measure, cut off from human associations, is the mystery.”

“But, suppose a person had ung-ung-ung-ung *always aspired to better things*, and they had been denied him ; then what ?” he said with an air of mystery in his tone and look, which made me think that he was not averse to making a confidant of me. So I replied :

“My dear brother, if there has been such disappointment in your life as would afford you relief to disclose to me, and such as would do me good to hear, then do not hesitate to confide in me, as your pastor.”

Evidently pleased at having an opportunity for indulging in the sentimental, and for living over again times and scenes that had grown tender and sweet with the passage of years, he took up the iron poker in his right hand, and resting one foot upon the hearth of the cook-stove, commenced speaking of his past life. I here give his story as nearly in his own words as possible, leaving out his occasional stammering on vowels.

## CHAPTER IX.

I WAS born and reared in an eastern state till I came to be a grown man. I early attended the district school, and with far more regularity than I should otherwise have done on account of a certain red-cheeked little maiden of about my own age and size who attended the same school. The first time I ever saw this little maiden I loved her, and loved her, too, with a passion as ardent and constant as I have ever been capable of exercising since. Yes, I proffered her my whole heart the first time I saw her, and without her wanting or asking for it. Indeed, there never was a time that we attended school together in that dear old school-house, that some other boy than myself didn't receive more of her smiles than I—because I stammered at times, I suppose. Hence when there came a day on which this particularly favored boy, for any reason, failed to put in his appearance at school, I naturally rejoiced, because at such times she was always most apt to be gracious towards me. I may truthfully say that there were other times, which occurred at rare intervals, when this little coquette, as the whim seized her, deigned to show me some encourage-

ment. One day I had been sitting by her side upon one of the long seats facing the stove. At her request I was assisting her on a difficult example in arithmetic. Our heads were bent forward over her slate, when, oh, rapturous moment! she permitted our temples to meet. And thus time wore on till each of us had neared the age of sixteen—she each year growing more beautiful, and I more angular and homely. To come into her presence during these years was like coming into the presence of a full-blown rose-bush after a warm shower. Whatever she wore, whether it were a bit of ribbon, a checkered apron, or a linsey-woolsey gown, seemed to be so transformed that it came to be a costly fabric, and the very thing that was most becoming to her. During all these years it was the same experience, over and over, with me. My passion was constant and steady, but encouraged by her only at rare intervals when the presence of more highly-favored boys didn't cause her embarrassment. One afternoon there came to our school a handsome young fellow from the city, and from his familiarity with her we soon gathered that he was an old acquaintance of her family. He was about twenty-one, and quite well educated. Before it came his time to stand up and spell in our spelling contest that afternoon, we boys looked over his shoulder and were made to feel astonishment at the skill he

displayed in pencil-drawing. And when he finally stood up to spell, I distinctly remember that I was far more lost in admiration for his stylishly-cut suit of gray clothes, and erect posture while spelling, than for his ability to spell almost any word that might be pronounced. When the school was dismissed that afternoon, her cheeks appeared redder than usual, as, heedless of the other boys and girls, she eagerly walked by his side, and proudly, as it seemed, looked up into his face. As I have said, I had come to be accustomed to seeing her favors bestowed upon others; and at least one other boy's heart was caused to ache more than my own on this particular afternoon.

"Our days in the district school at length came to an end, she still living at her grandfather's, and making occasional visits to the city where her parents resided. To my surprise she entered upon no higher course of instruction. During these years out of school I saw her quite often, for our homes were not far apart. When we could be to ourselves, I was at times made to feel that I was making commendable progress, and to even hope that some day I might really succeed in gaining her affections and winning her for my wife. But then this wealthy city chap was in the way most of all. His visits at length grew into something like regularity, and, not to multiply words, they were married and went to live in the city. You can

imagine what a blow this was to me. True, I had no claim on her; and I could not be sure that she ever requited my love in the slightest degree. Still, I had lived in hope—baseless though it was—of gaining this girl some day for my wife. This desideratum I thought to be the one and only thing necessary to my complete happiness in this world. And now, *to see her the wife of another!* I turned my back on the old home, and went to South America and enlisted as a common soldier. I cared not to live. Through this service I experienced many hair-breadth escapes; yet it seemed that a strange fatality kept me alive. One day in a kind of guerilla warfare, we charged upon the enemy, who skillfully retreated and shielded himself from our attack. All of a sudden it dawned upon our commander that we were being drawn into ambush, and he ordered us to retreat, which we hastily commenced to do; but the enemy by a skillful flank movement made it possible for us to retreat in one direction only. Moving on in this direction, our second in command remarked :

“ ‘Colonel, we’ve made a mistake, hav’n’t we?’

“ Biting his lips, our Colonel bitterly replied, ‘ Yes.’

“ On we went, or rather were forced, till we three officers were driven into a pen. On discovering that we were penned, we hastily turned in the direction of the only point of exit—the opening

through which we had entered ; but just at that moment, a brawny soldier thrust his bayonet across the entrance. Our arms were then rudely taken from us. A vicious-looking soldier, who appeared also to be an officer, with the help of two other soldiers, promptly seized our poor colonel, and barbarously mutilated his eyes, nose and mouth. Then turning to our second in command, they mutilated his flesh in the same way. Finally turning to me, I begged to be spared the horrible infliction. On they came ; when, preferring death at their hands to such mutilation, I suddenly whipped out a revolver which they had overlooked, and shot the foremost beast dead in his tracks. The shot was returned, and the bullet grazed my temple, dazing me for an instant. But deciding, no doubt, to reserve me for a worse fate, I was bound and placed under guard.

“ That night I, together with two other persons, escaped and plunged into the depths of the tropical forest. Making our way northward, as we supposed, our progress was rendered extremely difficult on account of the darkness and interlacing tropical vegetation. Near morning we laid down to rest. Long after sunrise I was awakened by a low, warning cry from one of my companions :

“ ‘A boa! A boa! Lie flat on the ground and watch your chance! ’

“ The cry was full of terror ; so much so that

his hands trembled, and he even wept while making it. My blood crept chill as he said, 'A boa!' for although I had never before seen the immense size to which this species of serpent attains, I knew perfectly well, now; for the one coiled around the low and almost horizontal bough above us must have been nearly twenty feet in length. At least two-thirds of its body were coiled about the stout limb as leverage, and the head and remainder of the body slowly swayed to and fro within a few feet of our supine bodies.

"'Lie flat on the ground and watch your chance!' again came in warning, measured tones from our companion who had first awakened, and who seemed familiar with the python's habit in securing its prey. One after another we quickly slid out of the monster's fatal sweep and plunged into and across a marshy depression, thinking all the while the awful serpent might be at our heels.

"In this adventurous manner ten years of the best part of my life were spent under the tropics. No opportunity for making money had presented itself; and I reasoned that if I were really doomed to live, I had better commence planning for a home for my old age. That was a miserable country, and I resolved to leave it, and leave it I did, and came here. But not directly. I resolved to revisit the old homestead and scenes of my childhood. The long homeward journey was

nearing an end. It had been tiresome, but not nearly so much so as the journey away from home had been. I presume this was because of that joyful feeling of expectancy which always tends to sweeten the homeward-bound trip. Brother Maybrook, I have been a Christian for only a few days, and perhaps I oughtn't to speak of it; but it has occurred to me that Christians, from this reason, in getting back to their heavenly home should have more real enjoyment than they had while getting away.

“A point three miles distant from the old home was the nearest I could get by rail. Here I landed about ten o’clock at night in the autumn. It had been dark and misty most of the day, and as I stepped out of the warm coach, the air felt damp and cold. Instinctively buttoning my overcoat tightly about my body, and pulling my hat down over my eyes, I, unrecognized, struck out through woods and across well-remembered brooks and fields. It was quite dark, and the walk turned out to be a disagreeable one.

“Notwithstanding I had a well-defined remembrance of every feature of the road as it had been ten years before; still I found that these years had brought obstructions in the shape of fence-rows and fallen trees. The air was not only cool, but the dismal rain had been constantly falling ever since I had left the train. The earth was

soaked, my clothing dampened, and my body chilled. Especially was this true of my feet. Added to all this discomfort, I was quite hungry, as I had had no supper. This was my condition of physical discomfort as I approached the foot of the rather high bluff, or ridge of ground, on which the old two-story frame house had stood for so many years. My hunger and the familiar surroundings caused old habits to assert themselves; and as I had done so many times before on arriving at this point late at night, I began to reflect on the comforts that awaited me at the old hearthstone and in the well-remembered pantry. I commenced ascending the stone driveway which led gradually up and across the brow of the bluff and landed upon a level in front of the house beside the locust trees. As I ascended, I reflected that I should find my parents abed, and very probably sound asleep. Of course I should not awaken them: there would be no necessity for so doing; for the coals from their evening fire would still be alive in the fireplace. I should simply stir them up and dry my damp clothing; enjoy the genial warmth, and possibly a lunch of something which had been left from supper. These reflections added energy to my steps; and not till I had half way ascended the hill did the old habit of raising my eyes for a look at the old place assert itself. *But this time the house was not there!* Never

shall I forget the mingled emotions of fear, disappointment and loneliness which, as a weight, settled down upon my heart as I made this discovery. For several moments I stood as one dazed. Presently I turned about in my tracks and looked, now in this direction, and now in that. There was no difficulty in locating the neighboring buildings, for it was now near midnight, and the wind had suddenly risen, breaking up the clouds and skurrying them across the face of the moon. Without doubt, there stood the old barn in its accustomed place; though, in truth, it did seem smaller and more dilapidated than when I had last seen it. In the opposite direction stood the solitary corn-crib. The beech grove and mulberry trees, in like manner, I discovered in their proper places. But the dear old house; the cradle of my earliest infancy and childhood; the harbor of my young manhood; the center of all the blessed affections that I had ever known; all that remained of it were two little knolls of broken brick and mortar corresponding to the chimneys that had stood at either end of the house. The ploughshare had, that same season, literally passed over its foundations, and a crop of Indian corn and pumpkins was maturing on that sacred spot of earth! I sat upon the new fence which the unfeeling agriculturist had erected in front, with a heart full of sad regrets. The queries

which had obtruded themselves upon my mind from the first kept presenting themselves :

“ ‘What’s become of the old home? What’s become of father and mother?’ The only answers that were returned to these questions were a momentary flood of moonlight, and the sharp snap of a corn-stalk, caused by the first plunge of a rabbit from his bed under a large pumpkin leaf where the front door used to stand.

“ With a heavy heart I turned in the direction of the home of a married sister a couple of miles away, who, after recovering from her surprise at seeing me, weepingly told the story of father’s death, and the demolition of the old home by a neighboring farmer into whose hands it had fallen. I slept till a late hour the next morning, and after a few days pleasantly spent in the home of my sister and her husband, and living over with them the scenes and events of other years, I was ready to turn my face westward. There was one precious experience, however, which I resolved should be mine before I left,—I would revisit the old home scenes alone in daylight, and for the last time. It so happened that the last afternoon before the day of my departure was warm and cloudless,—another of the myriad similar days that had passed over my head, ere this, in the midst of these same surroundings. So, without indicating to my sister as to where I was going, I

picked up my hat and started out. First, I came to the wheat-fields, but lately cut; next, to the little creek, in whose banks and meanderings were bound up a thousand memories of 'the bare-foot boy.' The same pebbles seemed still to be in the same 'riffles,' and were making those precious waters sing the same old songs. As a bare-foot boy, wading amongst these pebbles in the shallows, or treading upon the flat stones in the shady depths where the larger fish were always found, I had never been able to believe that, as a man, I should ever find in the wide world about me, waters which I could learn to love so well; and now, as I stood there listening once more to the well-remembered song of the troubled current, I realized that my early conjectures had been correct. With joyful, bounding steps, my feet mounted once more the sedgy banks, fragrant with growing 'peppermint.' As I walked along, now and then looking over into the deeper water at my reflected face and form—as I had done so many times as a boy—I observed that the tooth of time had wrought such great changes in the channel that, in some instances, it was impossible to locate certain points in the course of the stream. Presently I came to the old 'wash-place.' In times of scarcity of water at the house, mother had done the family washing at the creek. A large iron kettle had remained from week to week

suspended from a fence rail placed horizontally in the forks of two upright stakes driven into the ground. There was still the old box-alder against which mother had placed her wash-tub, and there was the large rock upon which the tub had rested. But, alas! mother was not there, leaning over the tub with arms and hands bared and red and white in the foaming suds. What would I not have given, then, if I could have recalled barely one of the hundreds of times that I had seen her in that position! Close by were two large stones, worn somewhat smooth on top, and half imbedded in the ground, upon which my brother and I had so often applied the 'battling-sticks.' The log, one end of which, in the years gone by, had been buried under the sedimental bank, and the other half immersed in the creek—upon which latter end brother and I had walked out to dip up the water, was now wholly hidden from view by an acre or more of sandy deposit. A little further down, still, stood the old cottonwood, larger and healthier than ever. Only a few feet from it I recognized a dear, dead old friend, the decayed and broken trunk of the old butternut tree which, in other years, had supplied me with so many delicious nuts. But, saddest of all,—the site of the old house where I had been born and reared was a cornfield! This was more than ten years ago. As I have already said, I at once turned my face

westward and came here. During this time I have homesteaded, pre-empted, ranched and shipped, till to-day—well, no matter, I am no longer as poor as I was then.”

Potts sat stirring the embers in silence with the poker as though he had completed his story. Observing that he didn’t proceed, I relieved my mind by asking a question which had presented itself while he had been speaking: “And the lady, your old schoolmate friend—it is to be hoped that her marriage proved happy as well as fortunate, from a worldly point of view?” I ventured cautiously.

“I have never heard anything to cause me to think otherwise.” And then, observing that I did not proceed with other questions, he continued: “But he’s dead now; died four or five years ago; and she and her little daughter now live with her parents in Hodon.”

“Ah!” I exclaimed, out of my interest in Potts, and my curiosity which had grown out of the knowledge I now possessed of the old relationship between her and my friend, “and do I know her?”

“Her name is Hester Vane!”

## CHAPTER X.

THE next morning Virginia Tracy gently knocked at our door. Before this she had been a frequent caller at our house, and so familiar with our family life had she come to be that she now scarcely waited for the door to be opened, especially as there seemed to be, just then, something of unusual weight bearing upon her mind. Sister Tracy was the maiden daughter of brother Tracy. His wife had long been dead; and since Virginia, or "Virga," as she was called, was an only child, she naturally, and I might add, necessarily, stepped into her mother's place in the management of the affairs of the household. And though report had it that Virga was just a little domineering towards her father from her throne as housekeeper, still no one could deny that she was proud of him and jealously looked after his comfort and honor. From some undefinable reason, or reasons, a strong friendship had, in this short time, grown up between Mrs. Maybrook and Virga. Possibly this had resulted from about the same reason, or reasons, that such attachments are every day springing up between ladies of mature age who resolve to be friends and spend

much time together. Sister Tracy now walked half way across the room, and proceeded to take off her hat,—which feat was finally accomplished by dint of much contortion of features, arms and body, necessary in order to remove divers pins which secured the hat to her hair.

“Well, what do you think, anyhow?” she gasped, breathless from exhaustion, and at the same time dropping half despairingly into my large cushioned chair.

“Think about what?” inquired Mrs. Maybrook.

“My being invited to the *old people’s party!*” she returned with special emphasis on the last three words.

“Oh!” said Mrs. Maybrook; “I perceive that you know something about the serial, also. Well, I have heard of parties before, but I never heard of that way of giving them. But I suppose it’s their way of doing things here.”

“*Oh, git out!*” was all that Virga deigned to respond. It was her way of showing her contempt for the whole proceeding. After a moment’s silence she continued: “When Hester Vane sent me that invitation I was never so mad in my life. She’d better think of her own age, for once. She’ll be trying to rank herself with the children, next! I thought something of the kind was in the wind last Sunday when I saw her whispering in the choir all through Bro. Maybrook’s prayer.”

Just then, passing out of my study, and into the room where the ladies were talking, Mrs. Maybrook, addressing me, said: "I am reminded by sister Tracy's coming of a matter which I had forgotten to mention."

"Indeed! Out with it, then," I said.

"While you were off on your hunt, we were invited to a party."

"And where, pray?"

"At the Hardencases'."

"Well, of course we shall have to go," I said, good-humoredly.

"You'd better not," chimed in Virga, "unless you are good dancers and card-players!"

"Why, Virga; you don't mean to say that brother and sister Hardencase would tolerate these things in their home as features of their party!" exclaimed Mrs. Maybrook.

"I mean to say that they have never been known to give a party without them. They argue that there is no harm in them. You folks'll have to get used to dancing and card-playing, if you live in this town and work with this church."

Thinking that there must, certainly, be some mistake as to brother and sister Hardencase, and Virga's last remark seeming to imply that there were others in the church with like views and practices, I ventured to remark that I was glad there were no more such people in the church.

"Why!" exclaimed Virga, in surprise, "haven't you heard that, yet? More than half the members of this church attend balls and card parties, and they'll argue you down that it's right, too."

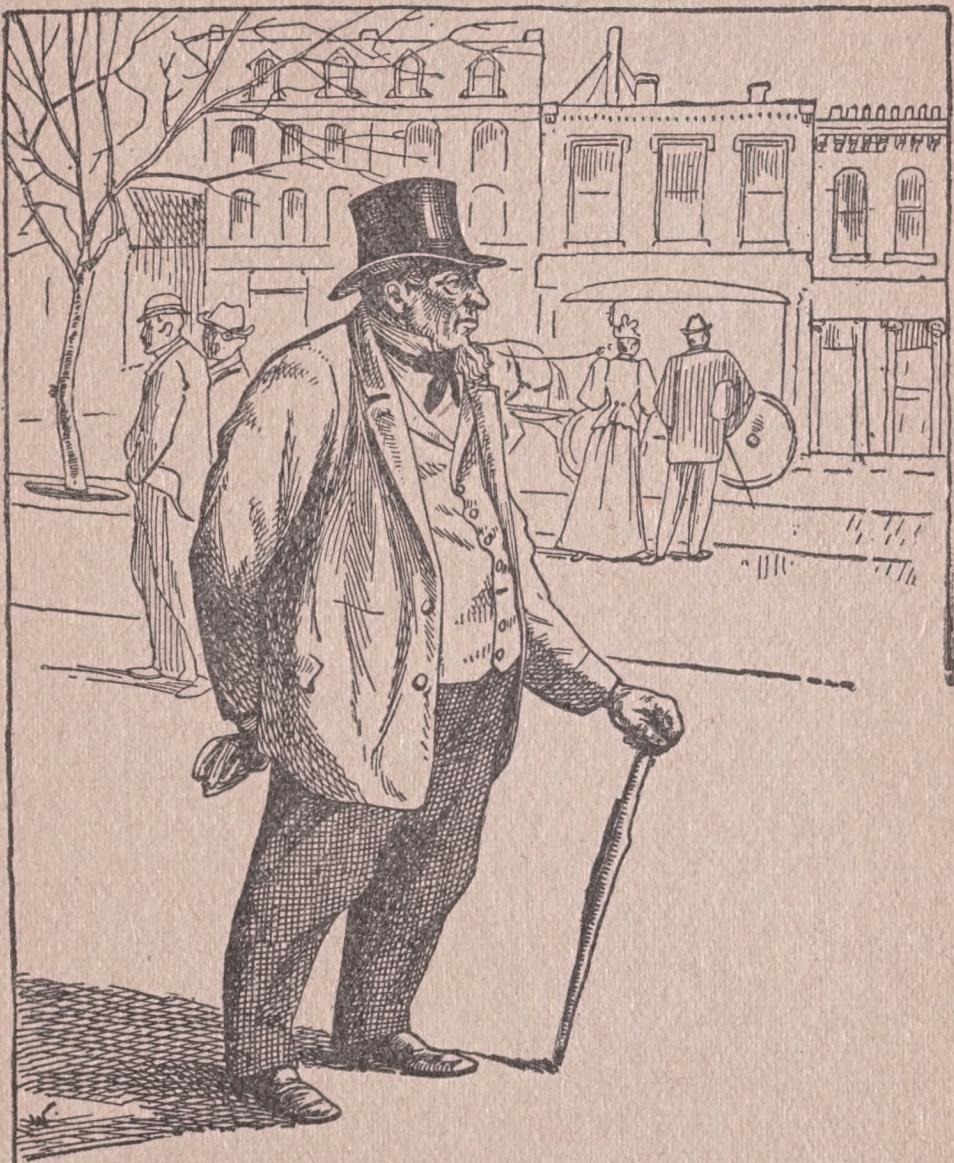
And, thus, had unexpectedly arisen upon our work at Hodon the first cloud with its portents of trouble. Cleverly, I reflected, had these things, if true, been kept from us both by officers and members; while, as I well knew, our own qualifications for the work had been diligently inquired into before we were finally called. But now that I had got an inkling, I resolved to know the whole truth on this score as soon as possible.

"But you haven't told me when this party comes off," I said, inquiringly.

"On next Wednesday evening," said my wife.

"Then," continued I, musingly, "to-day is Tuesday, to-morrow is Wednesday—but to-morrow evening is regular prayer-meeting. How can we afford to forsake the prayer-meeting to attend a party, and how can the Hardencases afford to do the same thing?"

"Oh," began Virga, in some sarcasm, "this is a *serial* party. Brother and sister Hardencase and Hester will have to stay at home to keep the goats from mingling with the sheep. The first of the series comes off this evening. This is for the old people, like myself!" glancing at Mrs. Maybrook. "To-morrow, or Wednesday evening,



is for the middle-aged, like you and Mrs. Maybrook, and the evening following is for the children."

"Indeed!" I said in mock gravity. "I have heard of many curious things ere this, but I never before heard of a serial party. But to-morrow evening being regular prayer-meeting, affords us a good excuse for not attending. Who knows that it was not all so arranged on purpose?"

Mr. Godown was not recognized as a brother in the church. It had come to be generally known by the members of the church, however, that Mr. Godown at one time filled the office of deacon and handed round the emblems of the Lord's Supper in a church in some eastern state. Some even thought that he had been elder, inferring this, no doubt, from his undoubted knowledge of the Scriptures and native force of intellect, which would no doubt have rendered him "apt to teach," so far as this single qualification might have gone towards fitting him for this more responsible office. But Mr. Godown, it was said, while he interposed no objection to the attendance of his wife and daughters upon all the services of the church, nevertheless was, himself, no longer a frequenter of the house of the Lord; had in fact been out to hear me barely once during my first half year in Hodon. Had he come to be an infidel? Yes,

and no. He still "believed the doctrine," as he declared to his wife, and to me, even; but he declared, further, that he had lost all faith in the sincerity of human effort to "live out the doctrine." In personal appearance he was low of stature, broad and stoop-shouldered, with red face and trailing nose, which, resist the thought as I might, continually reminded me of a gorilla that I somewhere had seen. A few short iron-gray whiskers on his chin were worn as unconsciously, and with as little care, as his every-day plain suit of clothes. His meat and drink was controversy; and, to do him justice, he was always well posted on current events. But especially did he seem to be well read on such subjects as comparative religions; antiquities, as embracing the results of modern excavations. These are subjects concerning which the average citizen knows little and cares less; and it was amusing to be on the public square and look in advance of Mr. Godown's progress along the sidewalk and observe the little knots of idlers suddenly stop indulging themselves in one another's lore, and scatter as he approached.

## CHAPTER XI.

THE Hodon *Sell Out* came out on Friday of the week of which I have just been speaking, and Mr. Godown opened his paper in the presence of his wife, and his small eyes glistened and his face turned a shade redder as he got a short distance into a somewhat lengthy local. Suddenly shrugging his shoulders, and accompanying the same motion with a nasal sniff, which he most always did when suddenly possessed of a new idea or argument, he turned to his wife and said:

“Wife, here’s an illustration of what I’ve always said, that church-members can’t so gild over dancing and card-playing with what passes for Christianity and respectability as to make these things right when indulged in by church-members, and wrong when indulged in by others, though not so well dressed or fed, under different circumstances; that the principle in both cases is the same, and tends to evil, and evil only.” And then he read aloud a carefully prepared report of the Hardencase serial party; such a report as is usually prepared for the press and gloried in by the giver of such parties. This one read as follows:

“Mrs. Hardencase, assisted by her charming daughter, Hester Vane, entertained a number of their friends on Tues-

day, Wednesday and Thursday evenings of this week in their elegant home just outside the city, because of their guest, Miss Door, of Crane. The enjoyment each evening was enhanced by cards and dancing."

Then followed lists of those present each evening, and in these lists were found at least a half dozen names which were also to be found on each of the church rolls of the city.

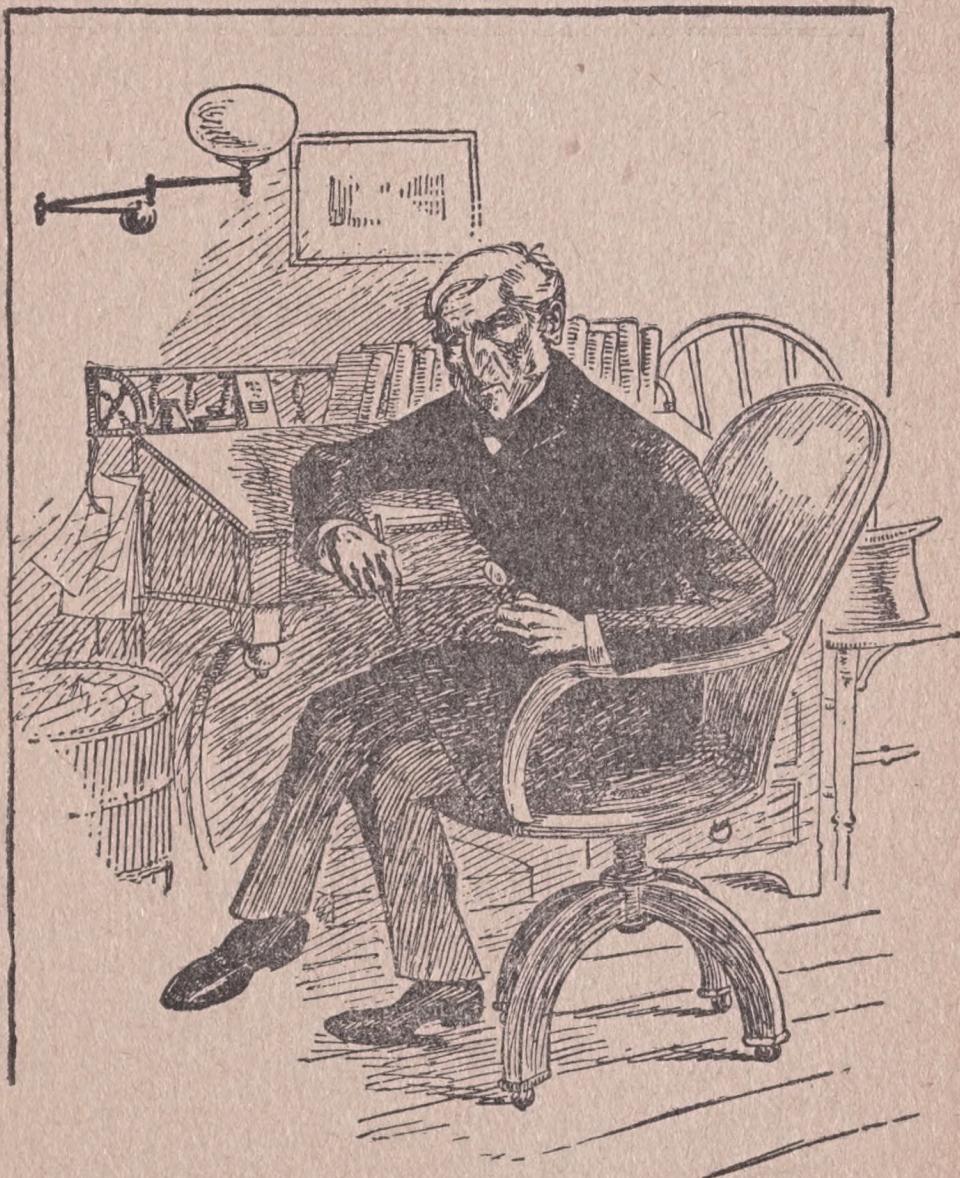
"Now," continued Mr. Godown, "please to notice that in this adjoining column, and so nearly opposite as to suggest editorial design in the arrangement, I find the report of another card-party which seems to have been participated in by less respectable persons, and under far less respectable circumstances. Observe how it reads:"

"It is rumored that a black eye which was but poorly concealed to-day, was the result of a 'quiet' little card game that took place a few nights ago in a certain second-rate barber shop on a back street; and that in consequence cards are no longer indulged in there."

A derisive smile was set in Mr. Godown's features as he turned the paper, half suspecting that his wife might venture a word of defense. But she did not. Now that her husband had spoken, the matter was settled, and settled in his way so far as she was concerned.

F. M. Sodders was a whippersnapper, accepting the meaning of this word as being "a small and insignificant person." Brother Sodders, though small as to his bodily presence, nevertheless was

naturally a great tyrant. No man, possibly, ever lived to whom a little pinch of authority was so sweet, and who could derive such exquisite enjoyment in the employment of the same, in persecuting others. Figuratively speaking, his chief delight, as it seemed, was to get a pair of small pincers fastened upon your finger, and then putting on his great power, blandly listen to your complainings, though he didn't look at you, meanwhile. He was too humble to do that; but would sit a little back with downcast eyes while flourishing with pen or pencil on some waste paper with his other hand, at the same time slowly and repeatedly shaking his small head in the negative in response to your pleading, a way of doing which some great men have. Neither did he allow his hand to be seen on the pincers if he could help it. I beg the reader's pardon for keeping brother Sodders in the background so long—a state of things, no doubt, extremely repugnant to the brother himself, and which he would have had far otherwise, could he have had the arranging of events of this narrative. I mean to say that brother Sodders was foremost in every department of church work; was foremost as deacon in bringing about our call to the Hodon church; was foremost as church clerk, as we have already seen, in notifying us of such call. Besides, it was brother Sodders who was janitor, church treasurer, and



F. M. SODDERS.

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Sunday school superintendent. And going on down into the Y. P. S. C. E., and other departments of church life and work, the good Lord only knows how many other offices were filled by brother Sodders. Tradesmen, mechanics, and all non-church-goers, generally, whose duties and interests might happen to lead them into business or industrial relations with this church, seemed to look upon brother Sodders as the church down town, so to speak, on two legs for the public convenience. If a gallon of kerosene was to be delivered at the church, brother Sodders had the key at his office. If they had occasion to allude to the church, they thought first of brother Sodders, and they spoke his name most always in high praise ; for, how was it possible for a man to be a whole church and not be a remarkably good and great man ? Who, then, would have ever suspected that brother Sodders as standing up under all this weight of official responsibility, actually wanted to be an elder also. I never harbored the remotest suspicion of such a thing, especially after he had been asked to accept, and he had slowly and repeatedly shaken his small head in the negative. And, yet, that was *my* fatal blunder. Brother Sodders really *did* want the office of elder ; and so badly, too, that he would, doubtless, have been willing to barter a dozen or more minor offices for this single honor. I ought to have suspected, at least, that

this slow and repeated shaking of the head in the negative was really brother Sodders' way of accepting ; for on a previous occasion when official honor was publicly tendered him, he acted in the same manner ; but in response to a question by the chairman he admitted that it was all *modesty* on his part that caused him to act thus !

I have said that this was fatal to me—fatal so far as retaining the friendship of the brother was concerned ; for his apparent declination caused me to innocently suggest the name of brother I. D. Tracey for this same office. Now, brother Sodders before this had been heard to remark that he hated I. D. Tracey worse than a snake. And it was a fact which I afterwards discovered, that these two brethren had no love for each other, and were both striving for the pre-eminence in the church—such pre-eminence, so to speak, as would enable them to carry the church at Hodon in their vest pockets. And thus I innocently lost the friendship of F. M. Sodders, and he has been after me with his little pincers ever since. And he actually succeeded in pinching me a little, once at least.

It happened in this way : a certain traveling troupe of singers was given a date for the benefit of the church—given a date by brother Sodders, of course ; for pray who else had any authority in the church ? Twenty complimentaries for the use

of pressmen and wives, and pastors and wives were turned over to the church ; that is, to brother Sodders, which all means the same thing. Now, it so turned out that while, as a matter of fact, all of the other pastors of the city received tickets, myself and wife did not. Pincers ! Then I remembered brother Sandrick's prophecy !

## CHAPTER XII.

ON the Lord's day following the serial party at the Hardencases', I made no allusion to the sins of dancing and card-playing in my sermon, though I fancy that those best acquainted with me might have detected in my manner a tinge of sadness and discouragement. A few weeks afterwards I dropped into a home where the ladies of our Aid Society were assembled for business and work. I dropped in without design, and intended to remain a few moments only. But it so happened that the ladies, just then, had a subject under consideration which concerned the vital interests of the church, as I considered. So I did not leave immediately. The subject was, "Shall a series of dime sociables be inaugurated as well for the sake of revenue as for the development of the members, socially?" I listened attentively as the discussion proceeded, and I finally gathered that the proposed plan was for sociables to be given bi-monthly in the several homes of the church; that while all ages were to be made welcome, the amusement of the young should be especially looked after by providing divers games for their delectation. I should readily enough have understood that our ladies meant

by the word *games*, such innocent games as "tid-dledy winks" and "pigs in clover," had it not occurred to me at that instant that Virga had previously remarked at our house that such sociables had been given before by our ladies, and that cards had been provided for the children that differed in no wise from those used by the common gambler. Hence, at this point in the discussion, apologizing for the interference, I ventured to suggest that if the plan were adopted it ought to be with the understanding that the cards ordinarily used for gambling purposes should be excluded.

"Well, then, Bro. Maybrook," exclaimed sister Hardencase, so sudden and fussy-like as to almost startle us, at the same time wheeling her chair so as to confront me, "while we're coming to this understanding, perhaps it would be well to come to another understanding. Quite a number of our members are objecting to your making a magic-lantern show out of the Sunday evening service. Suppose we come to an understanding that this magic-lantern business is to be excluded, also, hereafter."

"Agreed, sister Hardencase," said I, no doubt in some embarrassment. "My duty as pastor, as I understand it, is, in the main, to promote spiritual growth in the members of this church; and if any instrumentality which I may see fit to em-

ploy in order to accomplish this should prove objectionable to any considerable number of our members, I shall gladly abandon the use of such instrument, especially where there is no moral or religious principle involved."

Excusing myself, soon after, I walked down to the river and plunged into the foliage that skirted its banks. I wanted seclusion that I might think. The first warm days of spring had come, and the miracle of a vernal resurrection which their warm kiss had set in motion was now in progress. The swelling buds of the box-tree and such like stunted growth were bursting, and festoons of wild grape-vines in full bloom loaded down the air with a heavy, drowsy odor almost too powerful to breathe, and in which the honey-bee droned out its delight. As I said, I entered this tangle that I might think over the obstacles that had, thus early, presented themselves to my work at Hodon in the sins of some of the members. Was I to blame? I asked. Doubtless I had made mistakes; and possibly my offending members were doing no worse. If so, what third party could be called in to correct our errors? Evidently God's Word; its "thus saith the Lord" on all such things, and, in the absence of this, its spirit. Hence, my course in dealing with all such things in the future seemed plainly mapped out before me.

On my return, I reached the wagon-road em-

bankment which conducted to the river bridge. Starting through the bridge, I saw Potts on horse-back approaching the other entrance from the direction of town. Half reclining against some large horizontal iron rods, I waited till he came up. His crushing grip upon my right hand, and his honest, weather-beaten face, said to my heart in language plainer than words: "Here's the pure gold. Here's the material for a confidant and friend." Indeed, we had already confided in one another; for, from the first, there had been something in the steady, open gaze of his blue eyes, and the grasp of his brawny hand, that had attracted me to him.

But in saying this, and what has been said in preceding pages in referring to the few members of this church who have been introduced by name, I would not be understood as implying that good and true Christians were wholly lacking in the Hodon church, or were in the minority, even. On the contrary, these constituted a large majority of our members. But, as intimated, as a result of having been naturally drawn towards Potts, and repelled by our worldly members, I was just as naturally led to speak of this last class, first.

Potts had thrown one leg over the horn of his saddle in preparing for our conversation, but a suggestion as to his own comfort, and that of his horse, caused him to dismount and recline

by my side. Enjoying to the full that luxury which freedom of conversation with a friend is apt to bring, we, for this reason, discoursed on general topics longer than we should otherwise have done. At length I came to the point and said :

“Potts, I will say to you that I have been disappointed, not to say, *deceived*, in my selection of this work at Hodon. From recent events, I find myself being forced to the conclusion that we have quite a number in our church who are worldly, dancing, card-playing members; and that, resulting from blood relationship, we have another quite as large an element in the church that upholds and defends them. How is this, Potts? Am I right?”

“Yes, brother Maybrook; and if, as intimated, you didn’t know about these things, you are in for it, and no mistake. This is ung-ung-ung-ung *Hoedown* town, if ever there was one. It’s got its right name. Whether it got its name because so many church people ‘shake the foot in it,’ I don’t know; but if it did, it only goes to show that they have been at this thing a long time. But, let me ask: you speak of certain events that are forcing you to conclude so-and-so; may I ask if you have seen any of our members dancing?”

“Oh! no; I wouldn’t likely be around such places.”

“I thought not. Then let me ask again:

Have you talked with any of our members who have, themselves, seen any of our members dancing?"

I, again, said I had not.

"Now, there's the trouble," continued Potts. "And you will have the same trouble in dealing with this element in the church that the temperance folks always experience in dealing with the saloon-keeper. It's hard to get positive evidence. I'm like you: I haven't been there and seen for myself, but my hearsay is that they hold their club dances regularly in this town, and that at least ten of our members are included in the club. I don't think this is far out of the way. The other churches in town, I think, are represented in the club in about the same proportion."

At length, bidding Potts good evening, I reflectively bent my steps in the direction of home.

## CHAPTER XIII.

FROM this on, the spring and summer months of our first year at Hodon wore slowly by, giving rise to instances no more worthy of record than such as grew out of my daily visitation in the homes of our members. Heart-burnings there were at times, of course, resulting from the thoughtless use of the tongue, as, for instance, when I occasionally heard that I had been alluded to as, simply, "Maybrook;" or when it came to my ears through an equally thoughtless brother, that old "Foddy" Hardencase had given it as his opinion that a certain incident which I had related in one of my sermons "*was more than half a lie!*" Doubtless, during these months, at unguarded times, I permitted myself to be led into remarks to supposed friends in referring to our worldly members which, coming to their ears, occasioned heart-burnings on their part. Nevertheless, the fact existed, and could not be denied, that the manner of life led by this class of our members during this time, rendered largely impotent our efforts and influence as a church in the community. Several of our wealthy sisters presiding over elegant homes had come, as it seemed,

to take more delight in giving and attending card parties and balls, than they took in the services of the sanctuary and the various activities of the church. These things could not be hidden from the world, and the result was that the world had not only come dangerously near despising the whole church on account of the inconsistencies of the few, but there were also several of our most conscientious and self-respecting members who had come to that point where they were holding themselves aloof from fellowship and public worship.

The time had also come when brother Sodders' little pincers were beginning to perceptibly tighten up on our little household. For, be it remembered, that brother Sodders "had the bag"—was church treasurer—and, from reasons already hinted, did not put himself out of the way to collect our salary. But, notwithstanding all these hindrances, good works and growth in grace constituted the moving current in the channel of our church life, and all these sins in our membership were but the eddyings near the shore.

Our hot summer evening prayer-meetings during this time were not models for imitation to any great extent. Whether the hot weather tended to irritability in the old people, I am not able to say, but certain it is that our old brethren were generally disposed to be cross at the mid-week prayer-

meeting. I, myself, innocently caused the introduction of a bone of contention into our prayer-meeting in the person of a very pious and prayerful Seventh-Day Adventist. Having observed his pious and godly demeanor, and knowing that there was no organization of his own faith in Hodon, I invited him to attend our prayer-meetings, in particular. But our old brethren seemed to regard him as a kind of intruder and target for their remarks. Brother Hardencase, for instance, would arise, with open "Book" in hand, and say with a threatening shake of the head, as looking askance at the Advent brother:

"I'm a gwine to tell ye jist what the Book says about it, and then ye can do jist as ye please. My duty'll then be done."

Brother Tracey, in his turn, would arise, and addressing me, proceed to level a clear-cut scriptural argument against "The Cleansing of the Sanctuary," or some other hazy Advent doctrine.

After a song the Advent brother would himself reverently stand, and apparently in the spirit of one turning the other side of the face to the smiter, would indulge in a few conciliatory remarks, and finally ask all present to kneel with himself in prayer.

Sister Tungsend, who never did more than sing, and who was never known to say a good word about anybody except, peradventure, her own

husband and children, and their own favorite preacher in Ohio, would be sitting just behind sister Bunker. Sister Bunker, after herself sitting still through several dead pauses in this same service, would arise and rapidly exclaim :

“I declare, I don’t see how some people can sit still when everybody around them is praying or saying something. I don’t see how they can be satisfied with merely *singing*. *Anybody can sing!*” She would then resume her seat and sister Tungsend would be ready to declare that she meant it all for her.

Old brother Sandrick’s time would, at length, arrive—which was always after everybody else, and he had been called out. Then, after hanging his head for several moments, the old brother would slowly raise himself over the back of the pew just in front and the curve of his walking stick, till he had gained the floor. Standing thus in silence for a few moments longer, with eyes still somewhat downcast, and looking the very embodiment of gravity and wisdom, he would finally quote the very text of scripture which everybody expected, viz. : “How readest thou?” and make the very speech which everybody anticipated, and which some of the older brethren and sisters who had known him longest had heard him make, doubtless, a hundred times. This time, however, it was

plain to be seen that the Advent brother was duly kept in mind.

During one such meeting some one raised the question as to why more were not present. Brother Hardencase, whose ideas had become somewhat quickened during the progress of the meeting, and who was thirsting for still more gore, arose with "Book" in hand, and observed that he had had considerable experience in raising sheep, and when the time for feeding his flock arrived, if, peradventure, some of the sheep were not in view, he went out after them and brought them in. "Now," he said, looking at me in particular, "this Book tells me that every well-regulated flock of believers has its shepherds, and if the flock's not all here at feedin' time, whose fault is it, I'd like to know?"

## CHAPTER XIV.

IT HAD been talked over and practically decided by the superintendent of the Sunday-school, and leading members, that the children should be treated to a picnic some day during the hot weather, and it was unanimously conceded that a ride on the Narrow Gauge R. R. up Grace Canyon to the ore fields would be just the thing. But when the time at length came for the children to vote, these same brethren proceeded with the matter in a way to get a little amusement out of it for themselves. When the superintendent announced that the point had been reached for miscellaneous business, brother Tracy arose, and in a very earnest manner proceeded to say that the matter of a picnic for the children had been considered by the superintendent and others, and that it had been thought at first that the thing to do was to give the children a ride up the canyon that they might picnic in the shade of the rocks and pines; but that the matter had been reconsidered since, and that it was now thought that, inasmuch as the car fare would amount to considerable, it would be best for the children to simply throw their dinners to-

gether in the basement of the church and eat there.

Disappointment was plainly visible in the faces of the little ones. Many were seen to shake their heads and even frown. It was plain to be seen that brother Tracy's speech hadn't been well received; and when he had resumed his seat, the superintendent arose and remarked that the children had been made to understand that they were going to have a picnic, and that he didn't think they ought to be disappointed.

"*And I second the motion!*" exclaimed a sister with startling suddenness in the back part of the room.

Then resulted laughter and looking backward; after which the superintendent, who was enjoying the scene, said: "We'll take a vote on it and see whether we'll take the ride up the canyon. All in favor of taking the ride up the canyon, hold up the right hand!" Every little hand went up.

"That decides it, then," said the superintendent. "We'll have the ride, and if brother Tracy don't want to go, he can stay at home and eat his dinner in the basement."

"Or crawl up into the bell-tower!" observed some one else. Then there was more mirth—this time at brother Tracy's expense.

The day dawned bright and clear as a crystal vase. Two passenger coaches were placed at the

disposal of the Sunday-school and such other pleasure-seekers and business people as happened to be going up to the ore region that day. The iron track at length entered the canyon's mouth, and keeping only a few feet above and to one side of the agitated waters of Grace Creek, followed the meanderings of the stream and of the canyon the entire distance of six miles. So crooked were these meanderings, and so sharp were the curves around the rocky spurs, that our train, short as it was, assumed, at one instant, the shape of the letter S, and the next that of the letter U. In this latter instance, those sitting in the concave of the curve could easily peer out of their windows and see the small but powerful engine gracefully swinging around towards them, and furiously throwing backward its cinders and smoke, while rapidly jetting forth its che-che-che-che-che, as if in anger and desperation it were drawing its load; then, suddenly disappearing behind a rocky spur, the U would again change into S.

The children in gala-day costumes clapped their little hands and screamed; some of them from surprise, and others from fear, as they peered through their open windows upon the massive walls of solid rock on the one hand, or down upon the tossing waters of Grace Creek on the other. Now, the rocky wall would be cleft from bot-

tom to top. The next instant it would be spurred out against the track like the prow of a great ship. Now retreating, now surmounted by a sharp, tower-shaped needle, and now by evergreen pines. Now the color of the pitched and splintered strata would be red, now it would be black, and now variegated, owing to the mineral coloring matter contained. The children, on the other hand, as they craned their little necks and peered far down upon Grace Creek, saw its blue waters break into a hundred forms and shades by the curves and offsets in its rocky bed, but especially by the numerous bowlders which, as if by design, had obtruded themselves in the very center of the moving current. Corresponding with the railroad, and always on the opposite side of the stream, was a wagon-road, used also by the hauler of ore, as well as by the carriage of the pleasure-seeker. At one point where our train stopped for a few moments, the steep, rocky wall on one side of the dirt road, and the rocky verge overlooking the creek on the other, were so close together as to afford barely sufficient width for the passage of one vehicle. In this instance, two wagon teams, not knowing of the approach of each other, had suddenly met at this point. There was but one thing to do, and the teamsters were doing that. The horses must be unhooked, and one of the wagons taken to pieces and carried over the other, and

again put together. This, as I said, the teamsters were doing when we saw them. Potts observed that such a road wouldn't suit him; that he had been accustomed to more room than that.

The terminus of our road was finally reached, which proved to be at a point where the rocky canyon wall had swung half a mile or more away from the stream, thus permitting the deposit of sediment till several acres of bottom had been formed.

High and cool as was the general elevation, there was some sparse verdure, and a few hardy flowers scattered here and there. Here the hungry children lunched. After this, almost the entire school scaled a neighboring pine-clad peak. This was no easy feat for some to accomplish, and I observed that ere Hester Vane reached the summit she gladly availed herself of the proffered assistance of Potts' strong right arm.

When the summit was reached, which was a commanding one, other surprises were in store for the children. They breathed the light, crisp air as a new experience; at least with many this was the case, and each little pair of lungs at regular intervals would gasp long and deep in order to catch up, so to speak, in its breathing. Potts fired off a pistol, which sounded no louder than the bursting of a gun cap.

High over the deepest point in the gorge,

borne upon the blue and tremulous ether, a flock of magpies, in a kind of venturesome way, as it seemed, were bounding and chattering towards the pines on the opposite side. While, further up the canyon than we had gone, a rain-cloud had burst over the highest peaks, and had now settled down into the minor ravines, tributary to the main canyon. Splintered and frequent flashes of lightning—shuttle-like—gleamed up and down, outlining these dark ravines, clear up to their beginnings in the notches between the peaks. All found the descent more difficult than the ascent; and the downward rush of our train through the wonderful canyon to our home reminded me of the great blizzard blast that had come roaring out of this same canyon on a cold afternoon the winter before.

## CHAPTER XV.

AS ALREADY intimated, our little household was more and more made to realize, as the months went by, that brother Sodders was church treasurer. And, at the end of our first year with the church—which came late in the autumn—it took very little figuring to show that the church owed us nearly two hundred dollars. This all meant pincers in brother Sodders' hands, and being pinched on our part. Hence, I resolved that our entrance upon the second year's service should be signalized by a change; either Sodders should step down and out as treasurer, or we would resign the work and leave. And, in this vigorous way, I expressed myself to our church board at its first meeting for the new year. For, knowing so well as I did, this little man's love of power, I had no hope whatever that he would voluntarily relinquish any of his authority until literally compelled to do so.

When the afore-mentioned demand was made, brother Tracy—perceiving in the demand his own opportunity, and knowing that barely one member of the board would stand by Sodders—moved the board in such a manner that Sodders was

forced out of the office of treasurer; after which a new treasurer was elected. This was not accomplished, however, until after Sodders had stubbornly held out for a whole hour, weeping, and even praying, at intervals, that his authority might not be taken from him.

The initiative now being taken, the board determined to attempt at least one other reform. The dancing and card-playing members must be visited, and reasoned and prayed with; and if found incorrigible, be finally withdrawn from. I had no reason, as yet, for doubting the sincerity of any member of our board in this determination; for I had many times, during the year just closed, conversed with each of them, separately, and they had all agreed with me that some action ought to be taken against this element, as well for their own sake as for the credit of the church. Wherein I did mistake the members of the board in this respect was in the measure of their faith as to the possibility of anything being effected in this direction. The truth is, they had all lived in Hodon much longer than I, and had known of several previous efforts that had been made looking to the same end, all of which had resulted in nothing but bitterness and failure. Destitute of faith themselves, as it now seems to me, they were still willing that I should make an attempt, if for no

other reason, to show to the public the church's disapproval of such practices.

Accordingly, a called meeting of the board was arranged for at the home of elder Tracy; for brother Tracy had in the meantime been elected and ordained elder. The matter was, then and there, duly talked and prayed over; and finally a resolution was hastily drafted, and as hastily adopted, expressing the board's disapproval of Christians indulging in such pastimes, together with its determination not to retain in the fellowship of the church, thereafter, such members as should persistently engage in the same against the repeated remonstrances of the church. This resolution passed unanimously, with the single exception of brother Sodders, who expressed himself as being "not quite certain." But brother Sodders *was* certain that he had been severely pinched by the board himself, recently; and this, no doubt, was the reason he was not quite certain on this occasion. So it was decided before adjournment that the offending members should forthwith be visited and labored with, and brother Tracy and myself were constituted a visiting committee for this purpose. Of course, it was an extremely unwise appointment—at least so far as the pastor was concerned—but then, we were not infallible.

As per appointment, I called at the home of elder Tracy the following day, ready for duty,

unpleasant though it seemed in prospect. But elder Tracy couldn't go that day. He felt too poorly. Though feeling disappointment, I at length suggested that, if he thought it advisable, I would visit a few of them, myself, that day, while my nerves were steeled up for the task. He was only too glad to give his consent, and so I headed straight for the home of sister Manifold. This sister, I think, had been apprised of the board's action of the evening before, and was expecting some such visit. I suspected this from the fact that I found her husband at home, also; and from the further fact that the sister gave ample evidence before I left of having posted up on her side of the subject. But now, why recount it all? Suffice it to say, that there were the usual charges and countercharges;—on my part the affirmation that such indulgences are carnalizing and licentious, and hence unbecoming to Christians,—followed by extenuation on her part, together with charges against certain members of the board of certain common practices amounting to filthiness of the flesh and of language. This state of things, they argued, made it a clear case of "physician, heal thyself." While I was not personally charged as being guilty of any of these things, I was, nevertheless, made to realize that the board of which I was a member, and through which I acted, was not wholly free from sin. There could

be, at most, they argued, a question of flagrancy.

I then proceeded to the homes of two more of our dancing and card-party sisters, and, on acquainting them of the attitude the church board had recently assumed with respect to such practices, was met, in both instances, by substantially the same extenuation and countercharges. As a result of it all, my eyes at last came to be opened to see the true situation in which the church at Hodon had come to be placed—an awful condition for a church to be in—viz., absolute powerlessness to deal with this class of its members in the matter of discipline!

I was enabled to see this a great deal plainer a couple of weeks later. The board had dared to throw down the gauntlet; it was now time for the opposition to show its hand.

Thanksgiving Day drew near; and Thanksgiving ball at Hodon had always been a thing to be talked about for a long time before and after. This time it should be a *Bal Masque*! This was the edict of King Rex from his throne of chilled glass, or of some other authority equally high and revered amongst the light-footed in all of the Hodon churches. Why it was decided that it should be a *Bal Masque*, this year, I don't pretend to know; but from the effort put forth in the matter of costumes, it really did seem that such an attraction had been determined upon this

time as should insure the presence of all in the churches, either as spectators or performers—the ministers possibly excepted. Hester Vane's costume, being that of a painted and feathered Indian chief, was especially commented upon—in particular certain shines which she cut at the ball as clad in this costume.

The evening succeeding the ball I stood in brother Sodders' office in conversation with him and brother Tracy. Rather, brother Tracy and I were conversing in brother Sodders' presence; for, as usual, he was silent and non-committal. In order to appear interested, he gazed at everything above and in front with dilated eyes and working features—every now and then bringing his body into more restful attitude—almost always accompanying the latter movement by a huge sigh of evident relief. Presently, to the surprise of all, in walked Mr. Godown;—his short body, with its stooped shoulders, red face, trailing nose and clipped and clinging whiskers, reminding me more forcibly than ever of the body and face of the gorilla. Addressing brother Sodders, he said:

“Well, I presume you men settled the dancing question in your board meeting, a few evenings ago?”

Now, above all things, brother Sodders desired to avoid controversy with Mr. Godown, especially on this particular subject. Hence, par-

rying the remark with a ghastly smile—which was quickly followed by a long-drawn sigh, or half groan, several non-committal shakes of the head, and a shifting of bodily position—he waited to see whether Mr. Godown were on his side of the question. He hadn't long to wait.

"Well," further observed Mr. Godown, "as long as the world stands, men and women will associate with one another, so far as that's concerned; for that's nature."

Now, thought Sodders, he's on my side. I'll now venture one of my wise remarks: "Well, Mr. Godown, to tell the truth, I was not sure in my own mind that to exercise discipline against our dancing members was the best thing to do; and I so expressed myself to the board."

Now, Mr. Godown, in the words he had used, had not intended to place himself on the side of the dancers, as brother Sodders had evidently understood him to do. So, it was with as much delight that he perceived his victim land upon debatable ground as ever thrilled the spider on feeling his web struck by an unfortunate fly. Quickly turning upon Sodders, he said:

"And you, a deacon and one of the most active members in your church, have set yourself up for defense of your dancing and card-playing church members. No wonder this element is using the church as a cloak for its meanness! No wonder

the church board is powerless to deal with this element, and the church's power for accomplishing good in this town largely paralyzed!"

Mr. Godown concluded these indignant words with a sort of nasal sniff or snort, and with face redder than usual, he nervously walked to where brother Tracy and I stood as he might have done had he just been employing more exertion than necessary in demolishing a snow man.

Brother Sodders now saw that he was in for it. Feeling the keenness as well as the justness of the rebuke, and having no words of answer, he merely looked down his nose at the ash-end of his cigar, thence to his feet, and finally to the floor. Fortunately for Sodders, brother Tracy, just at this point, made a remark affording the discomfited man an opportunity for withdrawing. He slowly walked to the door. Without going out, he turned around, and passing us, at length intrenched himself behind his office desk, a position which, heretofore, had been so impregnable against the efforts of victims less informed than Mr. Godown.

## CHAPTER XVI.

A COUPLE of weeks after the events narrated in the last chapter, I chose as the theme of my Sunday morning sermon, "The Example of Jesus the Key to the Solution of Life's Problem." The sermon was an attempted exposition of Paul's thought in the second verse of the eighth chapter of Romans, "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." I showed that if the Christian, before attempting to take up in his own strength each day's trial as he comes to it, could only have presence of mind to reflect as to how Jesus conducted himself under similar circumstances, he would find his way in life cleared of its difficulties. I further showed that the reason why the Christian does not ordinarily have such presence of mind, is probably because he is not sufficiently filled with the mind, the spirit of Jesus.

According to previous arrangement, a children's exercise, or service, took the place of preaching that evening. When the time for the exercises to begin had arrived, not having to preach, I seated myself on one of the front pews along with a half dozen or more of our very little tots, amongst

which were the Sodders twins, and our own little Jew. The exercises concluded, and most of the crowd had left the room. I had, also, donned my hat and overcoat, and in company with brother Tracy was moving towards the door. On the way we passed sister Sodders and her children. This, somehow, reminded me of the dear little ones I had sat with and kept quiet through the exercises. And, feeling quite jubilant—for the exercises had been successful in every respect—in passing the sister, I remarked in a jocular, off-hand way I had acquired when speaking to supposed friends, “You sisters will have to pay me something for taking care of your little rats this evening!” Instantly I perceived my mistake—not only in my playful allusion to the little ones—but with respect to the person addressed. For, a moment’s reflection would have reminded me that Sodders himself had recently shown by several little acts that he only needed occasion to do me great injury; and consequently, that the wife could not have been in full sympathy with me and my work just then. At the same time, I felt sure that the sister knew from my manner that I had not alluded to her children in contempt, for other children than hers—our own child, even—were also included in my remark. So, after a parting word to the sister to the effect that her children had been models of good behavior while in my care, elder Tracy and

I left the house, and together walked homeward.

By the following afternoon, when elder Tracy knocked at our door, the incident of the preceding evening had entirely left my mind.

"No," said he, "I don't care about going in. I was on my way home, and only stopped to tell you that brother Sodders is on the warpath because of what you said to his wife last evening, in calling her children '*brats*,' as he expressed it."

"As I feared, brother Tracy," I slowly replied, looking at him with dilating eyes. "My remark was badly timed—but as little intended to give offence as the words I address to you at this moment. Still, those who look for occasion will always find it, you know. But," I continued, "you, yourself, heard what I said and how I said it."

"Yes, yes," said the elder; "I told him that it's a droll way you have of speaking to some people; and that I was satisfied you didn't use the word he thought you did, anyhow."

"But what does Sodders say?" I suddenly inquired.

"Well, I stepped into his office to collect a freight bill, just as I was starting up here, and he said: 'That Christian preacher of yours up there is in a bad way. He's been calling my twins, *brats*!' at the same time throwing down upon his desk a letter addressed to you and all ready

for mailing. Then he said: 'He's got to retract and apologize, or I'll whale him, if he is a preacher.' "

Again was I caused to think of brother Sandrick's prophecy; in particular, of Sodders' strong assurance of personal support in his letter conveying our call to the work at Hodon, viz.,—"And should you see fit to accept this call, you can rest assured of my loyal support as long as you may choose to remain among us as our pastor."

## CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN I called at the postoffice that evening for my mail, ere my box was opened I saw through the glass front, a letter, on the corner of which was the stamp of F. M. Sodders. Hastily tearing it open, I read as follows:

“HODON, Nov. —, 18—.

“T. W. MAYBROOK:

“Sir:—On Sunday evening, the 24th ult., you called my twins *brats*. I will give you until Wednesday, the 28th, to retract and apologize for your illiteracy and vulgarity; otherwise you will suffer the consequences. F. M. SODDERS.”

From the time the letter was opened, until the last word was read, I scarcely breathed. Then, attempting to take in a full inspiration, I felt something, demon-like, surging upward over my heart that rendered further breathing difficult. Rapidly, sentence after sentence—red-hot as thunderbolts, and inspired by a spirit from beneath—commenced to take form in my mind as a reply. So, by the time I reached my study, I had but to take up my pen and transfer these sentences to paper, to have my reply ready for mailing. It read as follows:

“HODON, Nov. —, 18—.

“F. M. SODDERS,

“Your insulting letter just received, and I deign to acknowledge the receipt of such an insult only because it affords me an opportunity for defying you to do your worst, and for reminding you that I am not in any sense your slave, purchased with your money, and hence in your power and subject to your lash. As to sister Sodders, I shall conduct myself towards her in the future precisely in the same manner as though the information that she chose to feel offended at the remark to which you allude had come to me through any other agency than yourself. In other words, any explanation I may hereafter choose to make to sister Sodders, will be made precisely when and where I may choose to make it, and in no sense in accordance with any limitation as to time that you may have set. In the meantime, sir, I have nothing further to say to you, individually, on the subject, except to warn you to keep close to the facts in any move that you may make in defamation of my character; for to the extent that the same may be damaged by you, you will be compelled by process of law to foot the bill.

“T. W. MAYBROOK.”

Then I rather proudly read what I had written to Mrs. Maybrook, putting into the words the same bitter and defiant spirit in which they had been written. As I remember now, it was all done with an air which said, “You need have no fear, my dear; you have a husband entirely capable of protecting the family interests, when necessary.” When the last word had been read, I paused for wife’s indorsement; but, while she offered no word of objection, I saw that the reply did not meet with the cordial approval I had expected. Probably, had she been asked, she

couldn't have told, just then, why she didn't altogether approve of it.

That evening I sat struggling with my tumultuous feelings long after the other members of the family had retired. And, when I did retire, I was restless and unable to sleep until long after midnight. "How was this matter to end?" I again, and again, asked myself. I shrank not from any corporal punishment within the power of the little man to inflict, for I felt that I was able to take care of myself, should it come to that. But I did shrink from the unpleasant publicity in which such a collision would, inevitably, result. What mattered my innocence of intention? I was to do so-and-so by a specified time, or suffer the consequences. I had replied in equally positive terms that I should select my own time and place, to the utter ignoring of the husband's dictum. I persuaded myself that the method in accordance with which the problem that confronted me was to be solved, was clearly outlined in my own mind, and, from the stand I had taken, the answer could hardly be considered an unknown quantity. Whatever it might prove to be, I felt at the time that it could hardly result in anything else than heart-burning and shame for me and mine, and the church to which I ministered. One thing, however, was even then a certainty—the course decided upon brought neither peace of mind nor

sleep. And, thus, I wrestled with my problem until after the clock had struck three—and even four—in the morning. Then, suddenly, these words, made up of scintillating characters, which in quick succession ran out and formed themselves, as in fire-works, outlined themselves upon my deadened brain,—“The—spirit—of—Christ—hath—made—” And, as I awaited the formation of the remaining words, thought returned. My eyes opened, and I was wide awake, as I recognized my text of the day before. Instantly its thought, and that of the sermon, crowded upon my mind, and I spoke aloud the word, “*Victory!*” For, I said then, that the law of the spirit of life in Christ—and not the law of the spirit from the pit—should be my key for solving the problem of conduct then confronting me. And, late as it was, I arose from my bed, committed the reply already written to the flames, took up pen and paper and wrote the following, which, while it entirely preserved my dignity and manhood, was at the same time pervaded by a Christian spirit:

“DEAR BROTHER SODDERS,—Your letter of yesterday came to hand, red-hot. Its spirit is, evidently, very bad, especially in one claiming to be a Christian, as you do—such a spirit as almost always breeds its like in the hearts of others. But, because you have forgotten your better self, is no reason why I should do the same. If the public were to read your letter, would it regard it in any other light than a case of persecution? If you and sister Sodders had felt aggrieved, or were in doubt

as to my meaning with regard to any remark I may have dropped, did you not owe it to me, as between man and man—to say nothing of Christian bonds—to remind me of such grievance in much milder terms? Had you done so, and then set a time for an explanation, I should have been promptly on hand at the time specified, as being only too glad to make any necessary explanation. And even now, at my own convenience, time and place, I shall talk this matter over with sister Sodders and yourself; but I cannot do so in the time prescribed by yourself. Were I so to do, it would be a virtual acknowledgment on my part that I am in your power, and subject to your dictum, which is by no means the case. Besides, were I to do precisely as you demand, it would be at a great sacrifice of my personal manhood, and I should be degraded in my own eyes, even.

“I have the honor to be your brother in Christ,

“T. W. MAYBROOK.”

## CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THURSDAY morning, elder Tracy and Potts stepped into Sodders' office, and found that erstwhile suave and placid little man in a great fury.

"Has elder Maybrook apologized?" asked Tracy.

"No; and the time's gone by, too, when an apology would have done him any good. Nothing short of soundly punching that man's head will satisfy me, now; and I expect to have that satisfaction, too, before I am an hour older!"

"As I told you," began elder Tracy, in a conciliating manner, "I heard the remark myself; and, while I thought it a little ill-timed, under the circumstances, and while it would have been a little rough had he really meant it, still, I know him well enough to know—"

"That he don't have any love for F. M. Sodders; and that he meant it as an insult to him!" Sodders indignantly interrupted. "But I'll teach him how to insult the decent and villify and abuse the innocent!" So saying, he hastily picked up his hat and rushed out of the office and up the street in the direction of our home.

"He's gone up to whale Bro. Maybrook, Potts! I guess we'd better follow at a safe distance and protect our preacher," said Tracy.

"You don't mean to say ung-ung-ung-ung at *that man would strike Bro. Maybrook*, do you!" indignantly asked Potts, with a rather frightful under-strain of voice, and breathlessly bringing up with the last word.

"I've never yet known a little man that wasn't domineering and full of fight," said Tracy; "and I'm inclined to think that if he finds Bro. Maybrook, as hot as Sodders is now, there'll be trouble. For the sake of the church, such a thing must not be allowed to happen. Come, let's walk up the street behind him and see what comes of it."

At the same time these scenes in connection with Sodders' office were being enacted, as subsequently reported by elder Tracy, I was leisurely walking in the direction of the postoffice from the opposite direction—for the mail had just come in. When I had progressed to within a block and a half of the postoffice, I observed Sodders enter for his mail. I thought I observed that his face was paler, and that he walked faster than usual. Almost immediately he reappeared, and was now slowly walking towards me, his eyes bent downward, devouring the contents of my reply of the evening before, which I recognized

from the envelope. Slower and still slower he walked, until, when within a few yards of me, he came to a full stop, his head still down. Then, having refolded the letter and thrust it into his pocket, he, for the first time, raised his eyes in the direction he was going, and—saw me. A few more steps and I should have been past him; but rapidly changing his glance from me to the ground, he as rapidly turned on his heel and walked in advance of me, by the postoffice, and thence towards his own office.

Again I exultingly exclaimed, under my breath, “Victory through Christ!” For, while my reply had preserved for myself a manly independence, it had been characterized by the Christ spirit. This had proven too much for Sodders. And again and again, as I wended my way homeward that morning, the words of the great apostle raced through my mind as a kind of a triumphant quotation, “The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”

## CHAPTER XIX.

A MASS meeting in the interest of Associated Charities had been called for the evening succeeding the events of the last chapter. It was to be a union meeting, so far as the churches were concerned. And the churches had, also, found it easy to agree upon the speaker of the evening—a well known philanthropist from the city. When I entered—a little late—the room was packed with those of all faiths and no faith. In short, the assemblage was, in every way, representative of our population.

It may seem a little strange to some of my readers to be told of Mr. Godown's calling the house to order and assuming the leadership of the meeting. But such is the fact, nevertheless. It would hardly be doing Mr. Godown justice to say that he led in dispensing Hodon's charities solely because he *was in the lead*; that, in other words, he wouldn't have been in the charitable work at all had he not been allowed to lead. On the contrary, from a long residence in the community, he had come to be fully established in the minds of all as a man possessed of genuine sympathy for the needy and hindmost in the race of life.

As already remarked, he couldn't tolerate hypocrisy in any of its shades of pretense and sham. Having, himself, failed to profit by the lesson to be learned from the Master's meaning question to Peter, referring to the conduct of *another*, "What is that to thee? follow thou me," he had faulted Christians to the extent even of imperiling his own soul. And it is to be greatly feared, also, that he had often been harsh and indiscriminating in his judgments of professors, confounding mere infancy and feebleness with actual dissimulation.

Hence, as things hadn't gone to suit him on this particular evening, and in view of the grossly inconsistent lives of many in all the churches—some of whom he knew to be present—it was no surprise to those who knew Mr. Godown to hear him discourse at some length on Christian dignity before allowing the audience to disperse. As his short and broad body with its usual stoop, red face, closely-clipped beard and trailing nose loomed up rather awkwardly before the audience, suggesting lack of experience in public speaking, the downward strokes of his heavy right arm at the same time suggested weighty argument, before which everybody would have to go down.

Said he:—"We came here this evening in the interest of the suffering poor; but so far as I can see, nothing practical has been done. And yet,

this audience is largely composed of Christians—those who profess to be followers of Him who went about doing good, and said, ‘The poor ye have always with you.’ But I feel it my duty to say that not only does the negative phase of many of their lives, as witnessed here this evening and elsewhere, argue their claim to be mere pretense, but that the positive trend of their lives proves the same thing. For instance, there are, perhaps, a dozen in each of the churches—and some of these dozens are here this evening, too,—who belong to the dancing club and attend the worldly dance. They not only do this, but actually endeavor to justify their irregularity by claiming that it affords them unusually good opportunity for doing personal work for Christ—some even going to the sacrilegious extent of quoting the Bible to prove that the modern dance has the Divine approval.”

Here brother Hardencase arose with book in hand and growled out:

“I suppose he means me, from that! And I should jist like for him to tell me where this Book says that dancen’ is prohibited. He can’t find it in the book; it’s not thar!”

Instantly Mr. Godown quoted Gal. 5:21:

“‘Envyings, murders, drunkenness, *revelings*, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.’

Now, reveling in this passage, is strongly condemned ; and if I were to admit—which I do not—that the apostle did not intend to include dancing in ‘revelings,’ it certainly is one of the ‘*such likes!*’”

Through Mr. Godown’s rapid quotation and comment, brother Hardencase remained standing, but was, at last, pulled down by sister Hardencase and Hester amidst general laughter, while the cry,

“Godown!” “Godown!” went up from all parts of the house.

“Again”—continued the speaker with his customary nasal sniff which always meant that something else was coming, and which might as well have taken the place of his “again”—“it’s a matter of daily occurrence that certain individuals (and some of them are here this evening), who claim the name ‘Christian,’ not only go into the saloons and name the drinks, but actually vote and sign their names to petitions for saloons. It’s a fact just as well known that these same persons don’t show themselves inside the churches where they claim membership more than about once a year, and then only because of a curiosity to see whether an evangelist has one or two pairs of wings, or to see the red, white and blue balls of popcorn on the Christmas tree !

“Still, others there are who, while they may not

take to the drink, to dancing or to cards, nevertheless, find diversion in persecuting their pastors. [Nasal sniff.] Now, I say that a church member who sends his pastor an insulting letter will be found to be a hypocrite in religion, a despot in his family, and too cowardly to meet a preacher face to face!"

Here a certain little man heaved a restful sigh, his vealy face turning a shade paler, and causing his lips to appear all the redder.

"I have but one more word in conclusion," continued the speaker, with his nasal sniff again, "and it is this: If I still claimed to be a Christian—which I don't—it seems to me, now, that my consciousness of the dignity of the Christian calling would cause me to direct my life upon a higher plane. The dignity of any calling depends upon the dignity of the party calling. If his imperial majesty, whose hand is kissed by servile courtiers, were to call these unworthy Christians to this supposed dignity, would they not, as courtiers, be very careful to not stoop to any act tending to lower the dignity of their calling, but especially of him who had called them? Yet, professing the Christian calling, they habitually stoop to the commission of such acts as would tend to compromise the dignity even of a third-rate king, at the same time saying in effect to the rest of us: 'Ho!

you poor, miserable scalawags, just look at us and see what you might have been.' ”

Then the speaker dismissed the audience, which broke up with cat-calls and derisive whoops.

## CHAPTER XX.

VAGUE rumors of an Indian outbreak upon the northern border had given place to positive telegraphic and editorial confirmation, and all this to military orders by those in command of the State Militia.

Potts, as captain of Company D, 2d Regiment of the State Guards, had received orders to at once conduct his company by rail northward, and guard certain exposed towns. There was barely time for donning the blue, and an afternoon drill. An uncultivated field at one side of the town served as a rallying ground for soldiers and citizens. A few young men who, just then, on account of poor health, happened to be unfortunate in being enlisted as guards, rather than incur the suspicion of cowardice, promptly reported for duty. There was martial music which thrilled all hearts. There was the usual uniformity of dress and of movement as the manual of arms was gone through with. Every mother's son presented a soldierly appearance, and many mothers were present to look admiringly on. If some of the boys exhibited finer forms than Potts, certainly none of them displayed his military bearing,

owing to his long military training in South America.

On the morning following, Company D informally assembled at the depot to take the train for the north. The drum was already heard in that direction, and thither the citizens massed to see the boys off. Amongst the very last to arrive was the captain. Along the private pathway connecting the Hardencase home with the town, Potts and Hester Vane slowly walked in the direction of the depot. His eyes were bent upon the ground, as expressive of interest in what she was saying. Her hand rested upon his arm; and as she earnestly and rapidly talked she looked up into his face,—in admiration merely for the neat uniform and soldierly grace—or through fear of harm that might befall him while on the expedition? Who should read the heart of Hester Vane? Still, how could her womanly heart have helped dwelling in the past, just then? How could she have helped placing a high estimate upon the man who walked beside her, and whom she had known so long and favorably?

Five days had elapsed since the departure of Company D, and the papers had as yet brought no news of a bloody fight with the Indians. Report, however, had reached town that our boys had had nothing to eat since leaving home but hard-tack and salt pork. This report stirred up

the dear ones at home to immediate relief. Accordingly, a great many boxes were hastily packed with provisions, amongst which were twenty-five dressed chickens and turkeys which were slaughtered for this purpose. These provisions were immediately shipped by express to the seat of war; but it so happened that the Indians had already surrendered, and the train carrying the provisions passed the train carrying Company D on the homeward trip. The day after the return, the *Hodon Sell Out* contained the following paragraph, preceded by these flaming headlines:

“The Indian war ends with a great battle! Many lives sacrificed, and poultry blood flows like water! Company D behaves like trained regulars, and victory perches upon its banners! But a large number of chickens and turkeys no longer perch upon their roosts! We have met the enemy and he is ours,—provided the boxes in which he was packed are returned to Hodon! While the Indians were sullenly moving from the north towards the mouth of the funnel, the regulars’ bayonets and the Hotchkiss guns being ready to receive them, an unexpected attack by feathered bipeds was suddenly made from the south intended to be received upon the table-fork bayonets of Company D!

“But, laying all jokes aside, the boys have come back home, and we are as genuinely glad to see them as if they had been gone a whole week. Every boy is a hero in the estimation of all of Hodon’s grateful citizens; as much so as if the blood which Company D was the occasion of shedding had been Indian instead of poultry blood. Yes, the boys were and are really brave, as themselves have abundantly proven. While stationed at the north, they occupied a position of real danger. They stood as a wall between the Indians and the rest of us.

Ugh! that's why the writer feels so grateful to Company D. When he thinks about those wicked Brules, measuring other's bravery by his own, he wonders why every member of Company D who could raise the money didn't hire a substitute. The writer certainly should have done so.

## CHAPTER XXI.

THE return of summer found us still in charge of the church at Hodon. A great change for the better had taken place in the church. Another protracted meeting during the latter part of the winter just closed had so greatly increased our membership as to render a new and larger house of worship a necessity. Nor was the enthusiasm and money requisite for the undertaking lacking. A ten thousand dollar brick edifice was already in process of erection, and would be ready for dedication by late autumn. This supplied employment for mind and hand of all; and, no doubt, took the place of many follies which our worldly-minded families would otherwise have indulged in.

But, alas! just as light began to break in prosperity there suddenly appeared a total eclipse, and all again was darkness. That wonderful change which we call death was destined soon to work such a transformation in the being of our idolized child as to cause him to disappear forever from our presence and home.

Little Jew had ever been the light of our hearts and home as passing through periods of deepest discouragement in Hodon. His childish prattle

and guileless ways—at times so uninitiated, and at others, so droll—but withal, so inquisitive as to the strange things he saw about him, afforded a never-failing antidote for the blues.

Late one afternoon, observing a day laborer passing in front of our house in the direction of his home, his curiosity was aroused by the man's soiled clothing and the dinner-pail which he carried in his hand. In response to his eager questioning I explained that this was a poor man. Then I explained the difference between a poor and a rich man; that while the rich man has plenty of money and can purchase anything he wants, the poor man must work hard all day for his dollar, and that this dollar is all he has with which to purchase food and clothing for his wife and children.

As a result, I had great difficulty in convincing the little fellow that a poor man has equal chance with the rich man in the race for heaven and in privileges to be enjoyed when once there.

“Papa,” said he, “can a poor man go to heaven?”

“Yes, dear; as easily as a rich man.”

“How can he *get* there?”

“Oh! God will make him fly up to heaven when he dies. God wants all good people to live with him in heaven, some day.”

"How can he fly up when he ain't got any feathers?"

I was again at a loss for a sufficiently literal answer that should possess the additional merit of being true. Seeming to notice my hesitation, he again quickly asked :

"But would God want a poor man to live up in heaven with him with such soiled and ugly clothes on?"

I felt that I ought to keep up some way, and replied :

"No, indeed ; but God will give him some beautiful shining clothes to wear in heaven if he is a good man in this world."

After a moment's silence : "Papa, a poor man can't have horses and carriages in heaven, can he?"

And then, again, giving him a literal answer in the affirmative, he seemed to reflect that if God has horses and carriages for everybody, he might as well possess one. Hence, his next question was :

"Papa, won't God throw down little tin horses for good little children?"

It will thus be seen that little Jew's stumbling stone was the same as that of many others, namely, he materialized heaven. For, if heaven is to be a place of substance, like this present world, certainly a Vanderbilt or an Astor will have better

facilities for gaining heaven; and, heaven once gained, will be enabled to possess more of its good things than the poor man.

The child's confused or mixed ideas as to religion and morals may be further seen from the fact that, only a few days after these last recorded questionings, he insisted that papas and mammas punish their little boys to make them bad, or naughty. This caused me to reflect that, without doubt, in many instances the little ones are punished when they really don't know the purpose for which the punishment is inflicted, and that, doubtless, such punishment tends to make them worse in every way.

Another day, when seated upon my knee, his mamma sitting near, we were both startled by his suddenly asking:

“Papa, would you and mamma cry much if I were to die?”

“Yes, darling; mamma and papa would cry their eyes out, I fear. But let us not think of so sorrowful a thing.” And then I changed the subject from grave to gay, thinking that such a tender young thing could know nothing of death. But now that he is gone, his question through sad memory rings. No doubt, during this time he had a premonition, more or less vague, of some wonderful change; that, as a bird from day to day, constructs its nest in the top of the tree, and then

flies up and settles therein, so our darling child was thus dimly forseeing his early departure for his home on high.

But we knew it not, our sight was so dim,  
Or we might have known what would come  
From the questions he asked about heaven and God,  
From his prayers and the songs that he sung.

And yet, there was really only one song which the little fellow often tried to sing. This was :

“Wock o’ Bages,” as the words were imperfectly formed by his childish lips. And even now as I write, I go back in memory to this time and hear once more—as I so often paused in my work to listen then—these same precious words :

“Wock o’ Bages, keft for me,  
Et me hide myse’f in zee.”

## CHAPTER XXII.

JUST after noon one warm day in August, after a light shower of rain had laid the dust and slightly cooled the air, I started with my little boy for the mill-pond to treat him to his first boat ride. In truth, I had another purpose in view beside the boat ride. I had derived a secret pleasure in anticipating the little fellow's exhibitions of surprise and delight on first seeing a live fish drawn from the water by means of hook and line and landed at his feet in the bottom of the boat. As we walked in the direction of the water, my mind was free from care ; and it was a real pleasure to get down to the level of the child's conversation and both answer his questions and interrogate him.

Presently we came to where the waters of Grace Creek were piled up to a considerable depth, owing to the mill-dam a short distance below. We entered a small frame house, situated on the verge of the almost precipitous bank that overlooked these deep waters. Here lived the owner of a little row boat which I hoped to be able to borrow for a few hours. The boat was not only placed at our service, but the owner's little son



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THE BOAT RIDE.

volunteered to accompany us and do the rowing. His trot-line, he informed us, was set a half mile up the meanderings of the stream, and as the back waters extended all that distance, and as the hooks had not been examined that day, we decided to row thither immediately.

The return trip had been all but made. Everything the child had seen had been new and strange; and through observing the surprise that was almost constantly depicted on his face, I, in a sense, lived over first similar experiences in my own early life. I had seen him clasp in his little right hand a minnow which had been unfortunate in being hooked. His eyes glistened as he examined, in order, the protruding head and tail; and an electric thrill of surprise and delight caused him to momentarily shudder as the minnow suddenly floundered in his hand. During the trip he had also seen a horse's skull at the water's edge, which had possessed no small interest for him. A turtle dove had built her nest in a shrub overhanging the water, and as our boat neared the spot she fluttered off. Lifting little Jew until he could peer into the nest he saw one little white egg. A rabbit, also, had been seen. But that which possessed most interest of all was a rather large cat-fish which had been taken from the trot-line. The structure and movement of its breathing apparatus as it lay in the bottom of

the boat suggested to the child's mind that the fish was chewing gum.

The boat was all but ready to touch the landing; and in imitation of the steamboat's whistle, I blew blast after blast on my double hands, as on a conk-shell. Thump! the prow of the little boat struck the pier, and the boy that rowed the boat seized the chain and sprang ashore to fasten the moorings.

Little Jew sat directly in front of me. Suddenly standing, and forgetting the child for the instant, I gave my attention to something in the stern. Unnoticed by me, little Jew had stood up at about the same moment, and my action, it seems, in turning to look backward, shifted my weight and caused the boat to careen. This threw my child overboard! Oh! horrors. My heart ceased beating and sunk as a heavy weight in my bosom. My temples surged under the vice-like pressure that seemed to settle upon them. The child was not to be seen! He had as suddenly disappeared from view in eight or ten feet of water as if a stone had been tied to his body. Without removing my coat, even, and without the loss of a moment's time, I plunged head foremost to the bottom, which with great difficulty, I reached and searched, but searched in vain, until I was compelled to return to the surface for air. Again and again the diving was repeated, but with no success, until, com-

pletely exhausted and half crazed with despair, I was compelled to desist.

The child had not been seen to return to the surface, and I had carefully searched the bottom. Had his innocent life gone out while his body was pressed up against the bottom of the boat within easy reach? I concluded, afterwards, that it must have been so, from the fact that his lifeless body was soon afterward found on the very bottom I had so carefully searched. But, perhaps, this was only my "might have been" which we all have in our night of sorrow.

Then quickly succeeded the heart-rending grief of the mother; the stimulating presence of sympathizing friends; the burial; the departure of friends; the desolate home; and finally, the awakening from my dream, or half-dazed condition, to the full realization that our beloved child had gone from us forever. As days lengthened into weeks our heart-hunger increased, and we grew more and more desirous for his return. In our dreams we once more felt his pressure of cheek only to awaken to disappointment. In the calm of the evening twilight we visited his little grave and longed for but one word of recognition from his spirit home, but only the song of the cricket from its nest in the long grass was returned.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

THERE remains barely one more scene to be described ere Mrs. Maybrook and the writer bade a final farewell to Hodon to take charge of a cultured city church at the head of the great northern lakes.

The scene yet to be described was also a boating scene. One Sunday afternoon when the weather was perfect, old Foddy Hardencase, Hester Vane and Potts slowly wended their way across that portion of the Hardencase farm lying between the Hardencase dwelling and the deep back water of Grace Creek.

As they neared the bank of the stream the old man quickened his pace; and by the time his companions had reached the water's edge he had loosened his little boat from its moorings and, oars in hand, was ready to embark. Hester stepped boldly into the stern, and having regained her equilibrium by dint of some rather wild gesticulation and the always-to-be-expected little scream, gladly took possession of the seat intended for her. The old man seemed intent upon nothing so much as maintaining his supposed reputation for

dexterity in the use of the oar, thus leaving Potts and Hester to enjoy the ride in their own way.

The boat was at length brought to its moorings; and while "Foddy" Hardencase remained behind to care for the boat, Hester and Potts started on the return walk alone. A plank fence, which abruptly terminated at the verge of a deep draw, must be rounded rather than crossed; and having first performed this feat, himself, Potts extended a strong arm that Hester might follow suit. Their route led them through a delightful natural grove of young trees, festooned with wild grapevines, and vocal from singing birds. A thick carpet of tender blue grass, flecked with shade, completed the beauty of the natural scene.

For some moments, as they advanced, a brown thrush had been pouring forth its song of ecstasy from its perch on one of the lowermost boughs of a tree a short distance ahead. Knowing that its song would be disturbed by their further progress, just then, they stood for a moment in the deep shade of the overhanging foliage enjoying the bird's perfect rendering of its song; and then, almost unconsciously, seated themselves upon the long grass at the roots of a tree.

As Potts looked into the glowing, matronly face of the splendid woman before him—the only woman he had ever loved, or cared to love—how could his mind help busying itself with memories

of the past? How different in appearance the matured woman before him from the little red-cheeked Hester of the district school! But it was the same Hester, notwithstanding; and in that identity were bound up all those sweet, sad and tender memories which combined to make up the history of his own life. Surely, to live apart from her the remainder of his allotted days would be to discard entirely the old life; a thing which, in the main, he cared not to do.

And what shall be said of Hester's thoughts during these moments? Was she still of a mind to flout the love of the manly man as she had so often done of the stammering boy? Or did she, on the other hand, feel a measure of remorse at the remembrance of the pain she had caused him to feel in the past? Was she proud of him now, as, at times, she had been ashamed of him then? And, as he felt with reference to his own life, was she now convinced that their lives must thereafter flow together in order that her own life might be unified?

We may not, certainly, know what words passed between them as seated there; but certain it is that when they arose to resume their walk, a new joy was swelling in both hearts; a new light was glowing in their eyes. Who knows but Potts asked Hester to become his wife? If he did, he

very probably stumbled on the vocal, and Hester just as probably helped him out by pronouncing the word "wife" for him.

I'm informed that, as a matter of fact, Potts and Hester were, soon after, married at the church, that all of their hosts of well-wishers might be present. The saying current amongst the elderly ladies, that Potts would be so good to a wife as to make her very happy, was abundantly verified. And, now that his old time dreams had, at last, come true, and Hester was really his wife, his own happiness was too great to be repressed. As he never stammered when singing, he got relief in occasional outbursts of song at unexpected moments at the mid-week prayer-meeting, when the organist would not be in position.

Old "Foddy" Hardencase, I'm told, is still telling the citizens of Hodon what is and what is not to be found in the "Book."

Mr. Godown still makes unobstructed progress through the streets of Hodon; and being a gentleman of some means and more leisure, I'm told that, in order to test the soundness of a theory of his, he talks of making a trip to Jerusalem and sinking a shaft outside the present wall, east of the Temple Enclosure.

F. M. Sodders was, finally, arrested and punished for breaking into his own office and iron safe

and stealing one thousand dollars which a too-confiding brother from the country entrusted to him for safe keeping over night. His purpose was to throw suspicion elsewhere; but the tell-tale dust on the transom case, together with other facts, unnecessary to mention, combined to fix the guilt upon the real criminal.

Old brother Sandrick's familiar form is still occasionally seen in front of the Hodon House. But the weight of years is telling upon him; his walk is slower, and he keeps nearer the middle of the sidewalk. The children all love him, and rejoice at his approach; for they have learned that when he passes his cane to his left hand—the hand that always holds the tin pail—his pantomime is about to begin, and the peppermint candy lozenge is about to be rolled.



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W. W. DOWLING, EDITOR.

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